

Ephesians Chapter 4
Week 4, v.4-6

Review vs. 1-3.

v. 1 Paul calls himself a prisoner of the Lord – God is the one who truly holds him captive. Paul trusts God for his circumstances.

Faith produces action. Paul has a heart that is desperate for the Ephesian believers to put their faith to action and to conduct themselves in a way that is appropriate to their relationship with God.

Paul's salvation in Christ is so valuable to him that he considers everything else worthless.

The invitation to be a child of God comes from God. The ability to respond to His call comes from Him. The desire to follow Him comes from Him. God is the One who calls us.

v. 2 In verse two we are told to have hearts of humility, considering others more important than ourselves. We are to be gentle, bearing injuries without the thought of revenge, having a mild and forgiving spirit. We are to be patient with one another just as God is patient with us. Finally, we are to come alongside each other even in our weaknesses remembering that God endures our failures and does not withhold His love from us.

v. 3 We are to be quick in our efforts to protect the unity of the church and disregard differences that have little importance. We are to be focused together on our common salvation through faith in the work of Christ on the cross. We are all united by one love in one God through one Spirit.

Last week we ended our study with the admonition in verse three to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". The theme of unity will override the next several verses in this chapter. Paul addresses specific reasons why the church should be united.

What is your favorite team sport? What do they all have in common?

Eph 4:4-6 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

In these three verses, how many times does the word one occur? Why is this important to note? Paul gives us seven areas in which the church is united or made "one".

1. One body - the church is composed of all true Christians. In the case of the Ephesian church specifically, the reminder is that it was not made of either Jewish or Gentile but all those who believed in Christ.

Ro 12:5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1Co 12:12 For even as the body is one and [yet] has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Eph 1:22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

What happens when all of the components of our physical body do not work together as designed? We do not function as well. We become distracted by having to address the things that are not working correctly.

2. One Spirit - the Holy Spirit that indwells each believer. For as many individuals who are in this room there are that many individual testimonies as to how God opened our hearts to His truth and called us to Himself. No matter what the differing testimonies of our salvation, the same Spirit is alive in each of us – the Spirit or Helper, which is given to us as God's children. This would have been especially important to address within the Ephesian church because it was made up of Jews and Gentiles with differing traditions.

1Co 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

“Isn't it marvelous that, regardless of what background we come from or how we have come to Christ, the one Holy Spirit of God has united us in a much more important common experience?” (James Boice, *Ephesians*)

3. One hope - The word hope in verse 4 talks about the confidence and expectation of our faith. Every true believer is looking towards the same end – eternal life in Christ. The hope we have in Christ is guaranteed to each of us.

Look at these facts found on the internet:

- * more than 1600 people applied for a single job as a Tacoma water meter reader, over 800 took the test and only one will get the job (komonews.com)
- * more than 600 people applied for a job as a civilian police worker in the UK...
- * it is estimated that for every job position that opens, there are over one hundred applicants, people continue to apply in the hope that they will be the one lucky enough to be chosen

Work seems to be increasingly difficult to acquire in our downed economy. When we use the word hope in regards to our lives here on earth, the context is more of a wish for something to happen or the possibility that it might happen. However, when we are talking about our position in Christ, it is not a case of one position being open only to be filled by the first to get there or who best qualifies. Our hope in our future with Christ however is absolutely certain. In this hope, the certainty of heaven, all who have been saved by grace through faith have a unified focus. We can stand together on the promise of God for our future.

Is your hope placed in a promise or a possibility? A promise is certain, a possibility is left to chance.

Tit 1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,

Eph 1:18 [I pray that] the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

Col 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel,

Tit 3:7 that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to [the] hope of eternal life.

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We are on the same team, therefore, we should be working together towards the same goals, for the same reasons, for the same Master.

Verse 5 of Ephesians chapter 4 goes on with this same thought:

Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

4. One Lord – Jesus Christ. As children of God, we have one Lord and Savior, the same Redeemer who has purchased us with His blood.

Ac 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Ac 10:36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—

Ro 14:8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

1Co 8:6 yet for us there is [but] one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we [exist] for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we [exist] through Him.

1Co 12:5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

Do you have friends or families that have different spiritual beliefs? In what ways is the feeling of unity affected?

5. One faith – one truth in the gospel of Christ. We all rely upon Christ's work on the cross for our salvation. Christians are saved by the same means – placing their trust in Jesus Christ.

We could have as many cultures, nationalities or traditions represented here, as there are people. However, if we are truly saved, we share the same faith.

Ga 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

Tit 1:4 to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

6. One baptism – consecrated to God. It does not matter so much how or when we were baptized as it does that we were baptized professing our faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, publicly identifying ourselves with Christ. Baptism itself will not save us but the act identifies us with the saving grace of God, and in that, we are unified.

Ro 6:3-4 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Ga 3:26-28 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

7. one God and Father -- of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Mal 2:10 "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?"

1Co 8:6 yet for us there is [but] one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we [exist] for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we [exist] through Him.

1Co 12:6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all [persons.]

Ro 11:36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him [be] the glory forever. Amen.

There is only one God that we worship – this continues the support of unity within the body of Christ. He is “over all” or above all. This word actually means superimposition of time, place and order. To superimpose means to place something over something else. God is The Authority of all. He is sovereign.

He is “through” all. To be through something is to be present in it. So God is present in all. He is everywhere.

He is “in” all. Through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

As Christians, we hold to the same promises.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.

Re 3:20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Ro 8:9a However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

One body	– the church
One Spirit	– the Holy Spirit who indwells in each true believer
One hope	– eternal life
One Lord	– and savior, Jesus Christ
One faith	– one truth in the gospel
One baptism	– consecrated to God
One God and Father	– who is over all, through all and in all

When we look at the truths of what we believe, there is every reason to expect the church to be unified. When we work together as one, we are stronger and are able to accomplish more for God's glory.

What happens in those times when we are involved in ministry within the church and problems arise? Do we perhaps lose focus on what truly matters? Are our thoughts and motivations centered on the truths that unify us?

Small differences can separate our "oneness". What can we do to avoid this? (think back to our discussion on Eph 4:3) How are you doing at "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? Have you had opportunities to practice?

In verses 4-6 Paul has shared the important things that all true Christians have in common. Keeping focused on these things helps us to work toward the same goals. We belong to the same family and hold the same truths.

How are you personally challenged to apply the importance of unity within the body of believers? The church is combined of people from many different backgrounds, experiences and traditions. God's love joins each Christian together to form one body with the same identification in His Son. Are you prompted to ignore insignificant differences in order to join together as a family in Christ for God's glory?

"There can be only one Christian family only one Christian faith, hope and baptism, and only one Christian body, because there is only one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit..." (John Stott, *God's New Society, The Message of Ephesians*)

Week 4 Ephesians 4:4-6

Small Group Prayer: take 5 minutes and quietly think about the study this morning. What is God saying to you personally? What one area do you need to focus on the most?

The themes we discussed today might help formulate your prayers: The 7 "Ones"
One body, One Spirit, One hope of our calling, One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and Father

Adoration: I praise You for . . .

Confession: Forgive me for . . .

Thanksgiving: Thank you for . . .

Supplication: I pray for . . .

If your group is done before 12 pm please use the time to quietly work on your memory verses or begin to work on the life application questions below. Visiting time begins at noon.

Life Application Questions

This week: Read through Ephesians 4 and use the "Apply It" bookmark to guide you in personal application. Pray for the personal concerns of those in your small group. Work on memorization and pray for growth in the areas God has brought to your attention.

In Eph 4:3 Paul instructs us to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." What opportunities have you had this past week to practice this? What were the results?

How do you react when your opinion of something or way of doing something differs from that of another Christian? What are some ways you can minimize your reaction and focus on building unity?

How do these verses play out in your relationship with other believers with whom you disagree with doctrinally? Is there any person who comes to mind? Is there anything you need to change in your personal walk or your relationship with this person?

In your own area of influence within the church body, are there any areas in which you are promoting division instead of unity? If so, what needs to change?

What is the main point you took away from this week's discussion about unity? How can you apply it to your life?