

ONE - Study of Ephesians

Part 6 - Unity, Diversity & Maturity

Our passage today serves as a pivot to the entire book of Ephesians. In the first three chapters, Paul writes about the believer's calling – our identity, our position, our relationship with God and the truths spoken over who we are 'in Christ'.

The last three chapters Paul writes about how this looks in everyday life. Paul is now calling the church to live our everyday lives in a manner that is consistent with the provisions made in Christ and consistent with the truths of the heavenly realms where Christ reigns supreme and the church is given power over evil.

Right Posture - Ephesians 4:2-3

Paul says the keys to living this life in a manner worthy is to take on a posture of:

- + Humility
- + Gentleness
- + Patience
- + Love

One Together – Ephesians 4:3-6

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit!

Unity is not an option for believers. It is essential to the very message we proclaim. The gospel declares the good news that, through Jesus, God has

provided a way of reconciliation with Himself. When we do not display to one another the peace that God brings, our message is compromised.

We don't make peace – we keep peace. The peace that unifies is the Holy Spirit. Keeping in step with the Holy Spirit allows the supernatural work of God's grace to be evident amongst the body of Christ.

One body – one Spirit. The basic, fundamental, underlying unity of a body exists despite surface divisions. And that is why the church is not just an organisation, it is one body. Only the Spirit can produce it.

It is the Spirit who forms the body for its final and ultimate goal, which is the one hope of the church – to display God's glory (Colossians 1:27b).

Of all the things that unite God's people, it is for us to know God as our Father (Ephesians 4:6). He is the goal and the aim (1 Peter 3:18). The mark that we have found Him is that we recognise Him as Father (Romans 8:15).

Family – that is the nature of Christian unity. The Spirit at work to bring us together under our Father. It is impossible to make any meaningful or significant union apart from this unity which is only produced by the Spirit.

Gifts from Above – Ephesians 4:7-10

Every believer has been graced with spiritual gifts by the resurrected and ascended Christ. These gifts are sovereignly distributed by Jesus (1 Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10). He has risen and He has conquered His enemies and ascended to the place of supreme authority.

The unity of the body is required so that when the diversity of gifts are working together for the benefit of all, maturity allows us to realise that the gifts are by God's grace to benefit the entire body.

Mature and Unified – Ephesians 4:11-16

Every believer is gifted, but some also receive gifts suitable with leadership in Christ's church. Paul specifically mentions apostles and prophets, (mentioned twice before – Ephesians 2:20; 3:5), and now he adds evangelists and pastor-teachers. Interestingly, each of these leader's primary ministry is speaking or teaching God's Word, which is vital for the unity and maturity of God's people (Ephesians 4:13–14; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9).

The task of church leaders is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12) – this is what brings about maturity. Maturity comes when everyone plays their part.

We need not fear these various grace ministries Paul mentions here – their purpose is to nurture and prepare all believers to do their own works of ministry, and as they do this they will enlarge and build up the body of Christ.

We must therefore live letting our behaviour match our beliefs. We must allow our actions to match attitudes, our decisions to match our doctrines. It will revolutionise our life and revitalise our Christian experience and rekindle in us a passion for Jesus and His church!

Discussion Questions

1. According to Paul, who is it that creates peace and unity? What role then do we play in keeping unity and peace?
2. Out of the four postures Paul describes (humility, gentleness, patience and love), which of these are you needing to work on? What would it look like to apply that to an area of potential conflict or disunity?

3. When do you find it difficult to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace?

4. Discuss the statement, "Unity is not an option for believers. It is essential to the very message we proclaim". Do you agree or disagree and why?

5. Why do you think it is that on all occasions where spiritual gifts are mentioned it is in the context of love and unity?

6. Of the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, how do you see each playing a role to build and equip the church towards maturity?

7. What are you doing to use your gifts that have been graced to you from God?