

I. Introduction

- A. 505 yrs, 13 days ago, a man nailed a public notice to the door of a church in Germany.
1. It was an invitation to converse about 95 statements calling for reform of the Catholic Church's doctrine and practice. Martin Luther; 95 theses
 2. This was not received well at all, and many see this as the event that lit the fuse for the Protestant Reformation.
 3. Many issues were addressed in these theses but one of the overarching themes seems to be that the organizational leadership of the Church were holding power that only belonged to God.
 4. There had been a mass centralization of power and with it a leeching away of the tasks and responsibilities that were meant for EVERY CHRISTIAN to engage in.
 5. 500 years ago there was a reformation of THEOLOGY, but my conviction is that still, to this day, our PRACTICE, in many ways, has not yet reformed
 - a. Though we believe that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we often still act as if the church organization and leadership are the ones who will accomplish the work of the Great Commission.
 - b. I am beginning to firmly believe that God has chosen THIS TIME in history to finish the work.
 - c. I am praying that there would be an awakening of Christians everywhere to the calling that we all have. To go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded.
 - d. And that perhaps this generation or the next might see the return of Jesus. I have no special revelation to claim this, only a fierce hope that it is true.
- B. Last week the leadership team talked through a definition of the church: A **family** of **priest-disciples** who make priest-disciples of all people in all nations, characterized by loving obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- C. Today, we want to examine what Ephesians 4 says about how that actually works—how we actually live out being the church that Jesus envisioned.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

II. Our Unity in God

- A. Walk in a manner worthy of your calling:
1. Disciples of Jesus are called to walk in humility, gentleness, patience, and loving forbearance ...
 2. ... *for the result of maintaining the unity of the Spirit (in the bond of peace)*
- B. The unity that we have is derived from God Himself.

1. We are not unified for unity's sake. Rather, we HAVE unity with each other whether we act like it or not because we are in union with God.
2. If the Holy Spirit lives in me, I am united with Jesus and a child of God. God is united to all who surrender to Jesus and filled with the Spirit and so therefore, so am I.
3. But we must be eager to maintain what we already have. We have unity, but must maintain it through humble love for each other.

III. Our Diversity in Gifts

- A. *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says [Psalm 68], "When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the Earth? [Jesus descended to Earth as a child. This is Christmas!] He Who descended is the One Who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) (Ephesians 4:7-10)*
 1. Jesus became God incarnate in His first coming to this Earth. After His death and resurrection, when He ascended to the right hand of the Father, ALL authority was given to Him.
 2. With this authority, He poured out the Holy Spirit into those who believe and with the Holy Spirit came giftings for the sake of the church.
- B. *And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:11-12)*
 1. There are four listings concerning spiritual gifts in Scripture.
 - a. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 4
 - 1) Speak of gifts that Christians HAVE
 - 2) Some people HAVE the gift of service or discernment or healing.
 - b. Ephesians 4
 - 1) Describes gifts that Christians ARE. The people THEMSELVES are the gifts.
 - 2) God has given people—apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers—to be a gift to the church.
 - 3) And these five "people-gifts" are given to the church to equip the saints for ministry, to build up the body of Christ.
 2. What isn't clear: If Paul envisions that all Christians fall in to one of these lanes of gifting or if just some do for the sake of the others.
 3. But what IS clear is that Paul thinks that these people, operating in their gifting are necessary for the church to stay unified and become mature and holy.
- C. The giftings: (These are summaries from MUCH reference work and shouldn't be seen as exhaustive)
 1. **Apostle:** Gifted to be "sent out" to pioneer Gospel work where there is none or where it needs strengthening.ⁱ
 2. **Prophet:** Gifted to build up the church with encouragement, consolation, conviction, and calling to faithfulness and repentance.ⁱⁱ
 - a) I want to say a few words to address concerns that might spring up in the typical evangelical mind when speaking of apostles and prophets in the modern day. For many of us in this room, when we hear the word apostle, or prophet, we think of a person chosen by God and given a special authority both in the church and in

producing Scripture, and this certainly is one of the ways that Scripture uses these words.

- b) So to call anyone today an apostle or a prophet feels very unsettling because of the weight and authority and speaking on God's behalf that we assign to those words. And if we used those words—that "high" definition—of people today, you should be concerned!
 - c) But as with many words, "apostle" and "prophet" are used in a range of meanings in the New Testament. The basic meaning of the Greek word for "apostle" is "one who is sent out" or "messenger." There are places where the Greek word "apostolos" is used in an official sense: those chosen by Jesus to be an eye-witness of His resurrection and so "sent out" into the world as authoritative witnesses of Jesus. This is clearly a closed group with some clear stipulations to be included: eye witness of Jesus in His resurrection state, personally chosen by Jesus for this office (Acts 1, 1 Corinthians 9). But the word "apostolos" is also used of others in the New Testament that were NOT eye-witnesses. Others called "apostolos":
 - 1) Epaphroditus—Philippians 2:25
 - 2) Titus and his "crew" of brothers—2 Corinthians 8:23
 - 3) Silas and Timothy—1 Thessalonians 2:6
 - 4) Andronicus and Junia—Romans 16:7
 - 5) Apollos—1 Corinthians 4:6-10
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 15:1-9—Jesus appeared to the 12,500, James, and "all the apostles."
 - d) It would be a mistake to think that there has been a succession of the original office and authority of the 12 Apostles and Paul, (apostle to the Gentiles). But I believe that it would also be a mistake to disregard the evidence that others were seen as those gifted to be "sent out" to be messengers of the Gospel but not of the same caliber and authority of the original Apostles. In the same way, today, there are those who take the eye-witness account of the original Apostles and break ground in new areas to make disciples where there are none. They plant churches where there are none and establish leadership for those churches. Though these may not be authoritative Apostles like the originals, they are carrying on the duty that must be done for the world to see Jesus.
 - e) Same with the Prophets. Passages in the New Testament speak of "the Prophets" as a select group of those who wrote Scripture that was inspired by God (Matthew 5:17, 2 Peter 1:21). Yet, the New Testament also labels others as "prophets" or "those who prophesy" (Acts 13:1, Acts 21:9, 1 Cor. 14:1-33) though not with anywhere near the same weight as those who were called to that official capacity, since the words of those who prophesy must be "weighed" by the others. (1 Corinthians 14:29). So while there seems to be evidence of prophecy enduring in the church age, it seems to clearly be of a lesser caliber and weight than the prophecy which came from The Prophets.
3. **Evangelist** ("Gospelers", "Gospelistas"): Gifted to clearly proclaim the Gospel to both believers and unbelievers (Bringers of the good news of Jesus)ⁱⁱⁱ

4. **Shepherd** (Pastor): Gifted to provide leadership for the care, faithfulness, and unity of the church^{iv}
 5. **Teacher**: Gifted to illuminate the Scriptures for wisdom and understanding that empowers obedience to Jesus^v
- E. Paul has already expressed that the unity of the church is linked to the faithful expression of spiritual gifts. Not only unity, but now he goes on to explain that the church operating in its giftings will result in maturity and holiness.

And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him Who is the head, into Christ, from Whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:11-24)

- E. Big picture of the gifts:
1. Paul is concerned that the UNITY of the church family must be maintained.
 2. Not only unity, but also its MATURITY and HOLINESS must be developed.
 3. And he teaches us that it is the people of the church, who are gifts from Jesus to the church, that will accomplish this, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 4. This is huge!
- F. If we faithfully operate in the giftings that Jesus has given us, the church will be unified and mature, and the Kingdom of Jesus will expand.
- G. If we do NOT faithfully operate in these giftings, the church will suffer division, immaturity, and worldliness; and our witness to the world will be compromised.
- H. Does functioning in our spiritual gifting sound “optional” to you?
- I. The church flourishes when disciples of Jesus obey Him by operating in their gifting. These gifts in action build the unity of the church family and build our maturity, holiness, and mission as we anticipate Jesus’ return.
- IV. HOW do I begin to engage in this? Give me some ideas!
- A. We will take the next two weeks to hear the stories from people in our church family who are doing just this and we pray that it will be fuel to your fire.

- B. But let me encourage you: your gifting and calling are given to you by no other human being. You have a calling directly from Jesus through the Holy Spirit living in you.
1. Take the next three weeks, spending time with God every day, and asking Him to reveal to you your gifting, your calling, and your lane of ministry to the world.
 2. Imagine what that would be like, not inside the walls of the church, but outside.
 3. Involve other brothers and sisters in Christ in that process. They may see you more clearly than you see yourself

ⁱ Acts 13:1-3, Phil. 2:25, 2 Cor. 8:23

Betz, H. D. (1992). Apostle. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 1, pp. 309–310). New York: Doubleday.

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 14

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/sam-storms-what-does-scripture-teach-about-office-prophet-gift-prophecy/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Evangelist. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 730). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 299). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

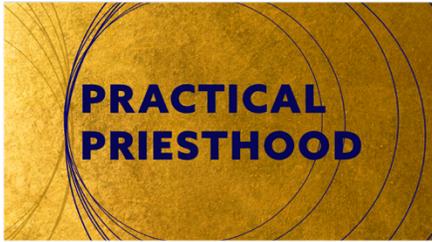
Stott, J. R. W. (1979). *God's new society: the message of Ephesians* (p. 163). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

^{iv} Vancil, J. W. (1992). Sheep, Shepherd. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 5, p. 1190). New York: Doubleday.

O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (p. 299). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

^v O'Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians* (pp. 300–301). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Myers, A. C. (1987). In *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (p. 988). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.



MESSAGE DISCUSSION GUIDE

EPHESIANS 4:1-24

NOVEMBER 13, 2022 | PASTOR TRAVIS EDGERTON



CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

- 1 What is something you are thankful for this past week?
- 2 What has stressed you out this week?
- 3 How can we respond to the needs just expressed in our group, and those in our community?
- 4 The last time your group met, was there anything you committed to after reflecting on Scripture? Were you obedient to what God laid before you? What steps did you take, or not take? How can we help?

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BIBLICAL TEXT AND THE MESSAGE ON SUNDAY MORNING)

- 1 Someone read **EPHESIANS 4:1-10**.

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." ⁹(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the Earth? ¹⁰He Who descended is the One Who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

What is the significance of the word "one" that Paul uses repeatedly? How are the seven "ones" related to believers walking worthy of their calling?

- 2 Someone read **EPHESIANS 4:11-16**.

¹¹And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him Who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from Whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

In v. 11, Paul talks about gifts that exist within the body of Christ. Who did Paul say gives those gifts? How does that change how those with these gifts see themselves and their role?

How did Paul describe the goal for which these gifts were given in vs. 12-13?

3 Someone read **EPHESIANS 4:17-24**.

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ! ²¹ assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

What is the connection between us being gifts to each other and the unity and holiness God calls us to?

What do these verses (1-24) reveal about God and His character?

What do these verses (1-24) reveal about people?

LIVE IT OUT (HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADING YOU TO CHANGE, BASED ON THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD)

1 What is Christ's intention in giving His people as gifts to each other? How can you grow as a gift to the church?

2 It's easy to think that those who are paid, or those with official positions, are responsible for the church. How does Ephesians 4:1-24 reshape the idea that we are all priests? What are the ways you most often misunderstand or underestimate your importance within the body of Christ?

3 **NEXT STEP:** Take some time to be with God this week and ask Him how He wants to be a gift to the church in the ways He has gifted you!

CLOSING PRAYER

If you have not already done so, take some time to share needs and praises with your group so that you can pray for one another, both during your group and throughout the week.

END OF FALL SEMESTER

This was the final week of the fall semester! There will not be any more message discussion guides for the rest of 2022. The spring semester will be starting back up the week of January 15 next year.

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise. Once a praise or a need is shared, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next person.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

EPHESIANS 4:1-24

4:1. The word “therefore” is the pivot word for the entire epistle. Paul was saying, “On the basis of everything I have written so far, certain results should follow.” The verb “walk” reminds us that holy living is a daily process. The term “worthy” shows us that we aim toward a high standard.

4:2. Four attitudes are essential to the Christian's worthy walk—humility, gentleness, patience, and love. Humility is the lowliness of mind that sees other people as valuable. Gentleness refers to strength under control. Patience means slowness to avenge a wrong or to retaliate when hurt by another. Love is the famous Greek noun agape, the John 3:16 kind of sacrificial concern for others that sent Jesus willingly to the cross.

4:3. The unity of the spirit already exists. It was brought about historically by Christ's cross. We experience it by God's Spirit. Thus we do not have to manufacture unity; rather we are to work at diligently keeping it. This happens as we focus our energy on expressing the peace that binds us to God and to one another (Col. 3:15). Christians are not called to create spiritual unity but rather to demonstrate it through relational unity.

4:4-6. The sevenfold repetition of “one” in these verses is striking. The bottom line is that Christian unity (one body, one hope, one faith, and one baptism) arises out of the Trinitarian unity of God (one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father—listed in the reverse of our usual order).

4:7. The grace of God saved us (2:8). Furthermore, He continues to work in each one of us believers, enabling the worthy walk. Our unity is not the same as uniformity. Diversity is expressed by the great variety of spiritual gifts that the risen Lord has given. The “measure of Christ's gift” means that He has distributed spiritual gifts to believers according to His plan, not according to our wishes.

4:8. Paul quoted Psalm 68:18 as the biblical precedent to explain the Lord's giving gifts to His people. This psalm celebrated a great military victory in which David praised God as the true King who had led Israel to victory. In ancient times, victorious kings often ascended to their throne with great pomp and with bound war captives following them (He took prisoners into captivity). These kings also received the spoils of war and distributed them to their own people (He gave gifts to people). In Paul's thinking, this was comparable to what Jesus did in His victory over death.

4:9. In His exaltation, the Lord Jesus is like an ancient king who had led his people to victory. The words “He ascended” point to Jesus' ascension after His victorious resurrection (Luke 24:51). In Paul's teaching, Jesus' ascent (from Earth to Heaven) necessarily implied a previous descent (from Heaven to Earth). Thus the words “He descended to the lower parts of the Earth” most likely refer to His incarnation, when God's Son humbled Himself and took on humanity.

4:10. Paul was more interested in highlighting Christ's ascent than His descent. His victorious ascent is greater than that of any mere earthly king, for He ascended far above all the heavens. He has taken His position at the Father's right hand (Heb. 1:1-3). Furthermore, there is no place in the universe from which He is excluded, for He fills all things.

4:11. Our exalted Lord has distributed gifts as He wishes. Although each believer has at least one spiritual gift, Paul focused on the gifted leaders Jesus personally gave so that congregations will grow. Apostles refers to those Christ personally commissioned. Prophets spoke messages inspired by God (3:5). Evangelists can make the Gospel especially clear and relevant to unbelievers. Every Christian is called on to be a witness for Christ, but some are especially capable in this area. Pastors and teachers provide leadership for local congregations.

4:12. To what end has the Lord given congregations gifted leaders? The goal is that they will train the saints in the work of the ministry. It's not that the leaders do all the ministry; rather the ministry is to be done by all believers working together.

4:13. In 4:3, Paul had urged believers to be "diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit." Now the term "unity" occurs as one goal toward which believers (with diverse gifts) are working together. This unity is both doctrinal and relational.

4:14. Paul noted two illustrations of what happens when believers work together. The first is drawn from human development. Individual believers grow from infancy to adulthood. The second illustration is from nautical life. Believers who work together will not be like a storm-tossed boat, upset by the waves and blown around by every wind. To be sure, there will always be false teaching to confront. There will be human cunning with cleverness. There will be techniques of deceit to lead believers astray. But Christians who have worked together to develop a clear understanding of the faith and who know Christ intimately will survive such attacks.

4:15. The cure for immaturity and instability is speaking the truth. Yet this truth is to be expressed in love—with compassion and understanding. Truth without love can be cold and harsh; love without truth can be mushy and weak.

4:16. Paul returned to the illustration of human development, but with a twist. This time he thought of a single body. It has a Head (Jesus Christ; see 4:15 and 5:23), Who directs all the operations (from Him). At the same time, the body (the local congregation) has many parts that need to work together. An individual church member is a supporting ligament or an individual part (see also 1 Cor. 12:14-21). Each part has been fitted and knit together by the Lord with all the other parts. With the proper working of each part, the body will do what it's supposed to do.

4:17-19. Paul's instructions denounced the readers' former way of life. The content of the instruction clearly parallels early Christian baptismal practices of putting off old clothes before putting on new clothes to enter the baptismal waters. The picture is similar to one in Colossians 3:5-11, except that the Colossians passage contrasts heavenly and earthly life. The Ephesians passage contrasts a person's former lifestyle and the new life in Christ.

4:20-24. Paul pictures the truth totally in terms of the Messiah, Who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). The apostle often described who believers already are, while also pointing to what they should strive to become. The practical paradox is that while freedom from sin's eternal penalty is already ours, freedom from the former way of life (a life of sin) comes only through our daily quest for obedience and purity. These are lifestyle commitments that every believer is called to make.