

BGCC Community Group Guide



Character of The Church

August 9th, 2026

The United Church

Ephesians 4:1-16

Main Idea: A unified church is made up of believers who walk together in humility, gentleness, patience, and love, remain united around the truth of the gospel, use their God-given gifts to serve one another, and grow together into the maturity of Christ.

Section 1 – Unity Begins with Christlike Attitudes

Ephesians 4:1–3

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:2–3)

Summary

Paul begins his teaching on church unity not with a list of activities but with a list of attitudes. Because believers have received a calling from Christ, they are to "walk" in a manner worthy of that calling. The picture is of people moving in the same direction together, growing and becoming more like Jesus as they go.

Matthew emphasized that Paul begins with humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love. These qualities are necessary precisely because the church is made up of people who are different. If everyone thought, acted, communicated, and were gifted exactly like us, patience and humility would hardly be necessary. But Jesus intentionally brings together people with different backgrounds, personalities, gifts, ages, experiences, and perspectives.

Humility was especially striking in the ancient world because it was not normally considered a virtue. Jesus transformed the way His people understand greatness by modeling self-giving humility. Philippians 2:3–4 calls believers to value others above themselves. Unity therefore begins when we stop making ourselves the center and learn to see others through the grace of Christ.

Paul does not tell the church to make a small effort toward unity. He says to “make every effort.” Unity requires intentionality, forgiveness, patience, and a willingness to pursue peace even when relationships are difficult.

Group Question: Why do you think Paul begins his teaching about church unity with attitudes like humility, gentleness, and patience rather than with activities or programs or systems?

Personal Relevance

Church conflict rarely begins with a disagreement about the surface issue. More often, the deeper problem is pride, impatience, defensiveness, greed/desire, or a refusal to consider another person's perspective.

A healthy church is not a church where everyone agrees about everything. It is a church where people who disagree still choose humility, love, and peace because their identity is rooted in Christ. Unity is not maintained by avoiding difficult people; it is maintained by learning to love difficult people like Jesus loves us.

Flow Question: Which of these qualities—humility, gentleness, patience, or bearing with others—do you find most difficult to practice when relationships become strained?

Reflection Question: Is there a relationship in your church where God may be calling you to make a greater effort toward peace?

Section 2 – Unity Is Built Around the Gospel

Ephesians 4:4–10

"There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all." (Ephesians 4:4–6)

Summary

After calling the church to pursue unity, Paul explains what that unity is actually built around. The church is not unified because everyone has the same preferences, personalities, political opinions, favorite sports teams, or musical tastes. The church is unified because believers share one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, one hope, and one Father.

Matthew emphasized the importance of this distinction. Unity does not mean that “everything goes,” nor does it mean that Christians simply agree to disagree about truth. The unity Paul describes is grounded in the gospel itself. The truth of Jesus Christ is the foundation that allows radically different people to become one family.

Jesus Himself prayed for this unity in John 17:20–23. He prayed not only for the disciples who were with Him but for everyone who would believe through their message—including the church today. Jesus connected the unity of His people to the world's ability to recognize that the Father sent the Son and loves His people.

That means our unity is missional. When Christians love one another across differences, forgive one another, serve one another, and remain centered on the truth of Christ, the world receives a visible picture of the gospel. We do not become united by making everyone the same; we become united by becoming increasingly centered on the same Savior.

Group Question: What is the difference between biblical unity around the gospel and simply avoiding conflict or agreeing to disagree?

Personal Relevance

It is easy for a church to become divided around things that are important to us but secondary to the gospel. Preferences about music, programs, traditions, schedules, or personalities can slowly become more important than the truth that we share in Christ.

The seven “ones” in Ephesians 4 remind us to continually return to the center. We are **one body** because we belong to **one Lord** and **one Spirit**. We have **one faith** because the one Gospel gives us **one hope** that saves us. We receive **one baptism** in the name of our **one Father**. The more clearly we see what we share in Christ, the less room there is for secondary differences to define us. The less room we have to decide our other differences matter.

Flow Question: What are some things that Christians can allow to become sources of division even though they are not central to the gospel?

Reflection Question: What would change in your relationships if you intentionally focused more on what you share in Christ than on the differences between you?

Section 3 – Unity Gives Ministry Away

Ephesians 4:7–12

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service." (Ephesians 4:11–12)

Summary

Paul moves from the unity of the church to the gifts Christ gives His people. These gifts are not primarily given to make individual believers feel important. They are given so the whole body can be strengthened and equipped for ministry.

Christ gives leaders who proclaim, explain, teach, shepherd, and spread the gospel. Their purpose is not to become the center of the church but to equip the church. Ministry is not supposed to be concentrated in a few professional leaders while everyone else watches. Church leaders are called to give ministry away—to train and release God's people to serve.

Matthew emphasized that this is one of the clearest signs of a healthy church. A healthy church is not simply one where the pastor is busy, the elders are active, or the worship service runs

smoothly. A healthy church is one where ordinary believers are being equipped and are actually doing ministry together.

This is why Sunday morning is not the destination of a Christian; it is the launching pad. We gather to worship, hear the truth, encourage one another, and be equipped so that we can go back into our homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and ministries and serve Christ there.

Group Question: What does it look like for church leaders to “give ministry away,” and why is that important for the health of the church?

Personal Relevance

Every Christian has been given a place to serve. Some may teach children, lead worship, encourage someone who is hurting, disciple a younger believer, serve behind the scenes, welcome people, share the gospel, or care for someone who is struggling.

It can be tempting to think that ministry belongs primarily to pastors and other church leaders. Ephesians 4 gives a different picture. Leaders equip the body, and the body does the work of ministry. The goal is not dependence on a few gifted people but a whole church learning to serve Jesus together.

Flow Question: What ministry or area of service might God be inviting you to step into, even if you do not feel completely prepared? What do you feel God has already prepared you for?

Reflection Question: Are you primarily consuming ministry at church, or are you actively allowing God to use you to minister to others?

Section 4 – Unity Produces Maturity

Ephesians 4:13–16

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

Summary

Paul's final picture is one of growth. Unity in the faith, faithful service, and speaking the truth in love are all part of God's design for bringing His people toward spiritual maturity. The goal is not merely to have a church that gets along; the goal is to become a mature body that increasingly looks like Jesus.

Paul warns that immature believers can be “tossed back and forth” by every wind of teaching. A church that is not grounded in Scripture can easily be shaped by cultural pressure, persuasive personalities, or deceptive teaching. Truth matters because truth stabilizes God's people.

But Paul also refuses to separate truth from love. The church is called to “speak the truth in love.” Truth without love can become harsh and self-righteous. Love without truth can become empty sentiment. Christian maturity holds both together because Jesus is both full of love and truth.

Matthew illustrated this through serving in ministries such as Awana and coaching children's soccer. Sometimes stepping into a ministry role forces us to learn, prepare, depend on others, and grow. Serving does not merely use the maturity we already have; God often uses service itself to mature us.

The picture Paul leaves us with is a body joined together, every part doing its work, growing together in love. Unity is therefore not passive. We become a unified church as each believer grows more like Christ and faithfully contributes to the life of the body.

Group Question: Why do you think serving alongside other believers can actually help us grow spiritually and become more mature?

Personal Relevance

Spiritual maturity is not measured only by how much Bible knowledge we possess. Mature Christians know the truth, live the truth, speak the truth in love, and use what God has given them to serve others.

Christian community provides opportunities to practice patience, forgiveness, encouragement, truthfulness, humility, and love. We often discover our need to grow precisely because we are serving alongside imperfect people. God uses those relationships to shape us into the image of Christ.

Flow Question: Where do you currently have opportunities to grow by serving alongside other believers?

Reflection Question: What is one way you could intentionally speak truth in love, serve someone else, or contribute to the body of Christ this week?

Conclusion

Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4 gives us a picture of what a unified church actually looks like. Unity begins with Christlike attitudes—humility, gentleness, patience, and love. It is centered on the unchanging truth of the gospel rather than on personal preferences. It gives ministry away so that every believer can serve. And it produces maturity as the whole body grows together toward Christ.

Jesus prayed that His people would be one because our unity is connected to the world's ability to see His love. That does not mean making everyone the same. It means becoming more like the same Savior. The church is healthiest when different people, with different gifts and backgrounds, are walking in the same direction because they are centered on Jesus.

Matthew closed by reminding the church that Sunday morning is not the destination of a Christian but the launching pad. We gather so that we can be equipped, encouraged, and sent. The goal is not simply to have a unified service in this room but to become a unified people who carry the gospel into the world together.

As you leave today, consider these questions:

- Am I contributing to unity through humility, patience, gentleness, and love?
- Have I allowed a preference or secondary issue to become more important than the mission?
- Where is God calling me to serve and help equip others?
- Who is helping me grow toward Christ, and who am I helping grow?
- Where do I need to speak the truth in love this week?

A unified church is not a church where everyone is the same. It is a church where every believer is becoming more like Christ, faithfully serving the body, and walking together in the truth and love of the gospel.