

## Lesson 11

# What Makes Us One?

## *Ephesians 4.4-6*

### Overview

As Paul addresses the Ephesians, he is very aware of the wide range of personalities and temperaments among his readers, who would have come from very diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Now, as members of the Lord's body, he wants all believers (including us) to focus more on the spiritual foundation that unites them. The presence of the Spirit, Lord, and the Father completely transcend any human differences of background, education, culture, etc.

As we review the verses leading up to our study today, we remember that Paul has called for us to *walk worthy of the calling we have received*, 4.1. In other words, we have to live the life. Next, Paul speaks about *how* to walk worthy by discussing the attitudes that must be developed in the inner self, 4.2-3. Verses 7-11 shows us how, in order to walk worthy, we need to take advantage of the resources God provides by embracing the great diversity of gifts God has given as well as the gifted men who equip saints for the work of ministry, 4.7-11. As saints do the work of ministry, the body is built up, spiritual maturity comes about, doctrinal stability results, loving evangelism happens, which all leads to growth, 4.12-16.

The foundation for it all rests in verses 4-6. The seven ones serve as the basis for our spiritual life and unity with God and other believers.

### The Bigger Picture

The verses in our text are not to be seen as a formal creed of the church, but they clearly are a collection of statements that would have been readily affirmed by those inside the early church. Paul has similar statements in 1 Corinthians 8.6, where he speaks of one God and one Lord, and, 1 Corinthians 12.4-6, where he speaks of the same Lord, Spirit, and God.

Some believe these verses are a fragment of an early Christian hymn.<sup>12</sup>

### The Text

#### NLT

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NLT)

<sup>4</sup>For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

<sup>5</sup>There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

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<sup>12</sup> Foulkes, Francis. *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 10 of *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989, Vol. 10, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

### CSB

Ephesians 4:4–6 (CSB)

<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—

<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

<sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

## Explore the Text

1. Why do you think Paul uses the word “one” so much in these verses? What is the point?
2. Do you think there is any significance to there being 7 “ones” here? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. What is the body Paul refers to?
4. What is our one hope?
5. What is the *one faith* Paul refers to?
6. Why do you think Paul mentions baptism here?

## About the Text

Ephesians 4.4-6 serves as a type of bridge between Paul’s call for unity in verses 2-3 and his discussion of diversity that begins in verse 7. Everything here needs to be viewed with unity in mind. Christians are

one spiritually with the Spirit, Lord, and Father and are one with one another. Here, Paul speaks of the marks of oneness that are basic to our doctrine and life.

### I. 4.4: Unity in the Spirit

#### A. One Body

- i. The “body” is the church, which is made up of individual believers in Christ. When we think of the church, this is where our minds should go first . . . not to an institution or hierarchy or organization.
- ii. There is only one. The unity of this body is at the core of Paul’s writing in Ephesians, see especially 2.11-22. All the things that would typically divide human beings have been taken away (ethnic, race, gender, etc.)
- iii. The unity we enjoy should rise above any human association or society that has its grounding in this world.

#### B. One Spirit

- i. The Spirit dwells inside the believer and serves as the unifying force in the body. *In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit, Ephesians 2.21-22.*
- ii. The Spirit creates, fills, coordinates, orchestrates, and empowers the body of Christ.<sup>13</sup>
- iii. All who are members of the one body are that because of the Spirit of God dwelling in them, Romans 8.9.

#### C. One Hope

- i. The *hope of our calling* is our ultimate perfection and glory through Christ. (Ephesians 1.4; Romans 8.29)
- ii. We will realize our hope when we see Him face to face, 1 John 3.2. Christ is the *hope of our glory*, Colossians 1.27.
- iii. The receiving of this hope is guaranteed by the Spirit, Ephesians 1.13-14.

### II. 4.5: Unity in Christ

#### A. One Lord

- i. Jesus is the object of our faith, Ephesians 3.12.
- ii. He is *the way*, John 14.6; salvation is *in no other*, Acts 4.12; He is *Lord of all*, Romans 10.12.
- iii. Where there is the same Lord, all (black/white; rich/poor; great/small) are yoked together.

#### B. One Faith

- i. This is the set of teachings handed down in the word of God, which all have their basis in the common belief in Christ.
- ii. References to “the faith” abound in Paul’s later writing in the Pastorals<sup>14</sup>, and there is a reference to *the faith* in Jude 3, of which we are to *contend for*.

#### C. One Baptism

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<sup>13</sup> Hughes, R. Kent. *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990, p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Timothy 3.9; 4.1, 6; Titus 1.4.



5. What is *the faith*?
  
6. What brings us together in baptism?
  
7. What does Ephesians 1.5 say about the Father, from who our unity originates?

## For Today's Christian

**The Spirit brings unity.** Through His work, all believers are made alive spiritually on the occasion of their baptism, Titus 3.4-6. Spiritual life is being granted to all types of people from every imaginable background, culture, status, or citizenship. Every possible wall a man or woman could erect, the Holy Spirit has torn down. We are *being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit*, Ephesians 2.22. We need to see the significance of the Spirit's work, respect it, and live inside of it. Every day, we need to *make every effort* to promote peace, 4.3.

**The Lord ministers in unity.** He is the object of our faith, 1 Corinthians 8.6. One day every tongue will confess that He is Lord, Philippians 2.11. Our faith is rooted in the Word of the Lord, which has been delivered once and for all to all the saints, Jude 3. It is for this faith we are to contend. And, it is in Him that we have been baptized, Galatians 3.26-27. Every Christian has the same start ... in the waters of baptism. It is an experience that should draw each one of us together.

**The Father works in unity.** All Christians have the same Father. We are family. Brothers and sisters, each with a common start, a shared destiny, all made possible by the love of the Father, Ephesians 1.5; John 3.16. The beauty of it all is that while we all may be very different ... we all share the same identity ... and that alone should bring us together in unity and love.

## Journal

As you go about this week, write down some of the things that the Spirit, Lord, and Father have done to make you one with other believers. You share the same ....

Since this is the case, why do we have division in the church? What do you think God thinks about this?

## For Further Study

Explore the New Testament for other passages that speak of God's love for us in His great desire to save us from sin.