

EPHESIANS 4

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Unity and Diversity in the Body of Christ

The book of Ephesians takes us through God's eternal plan for mankind. The first three chapters concentrate on salvation, which is both for Jews and Gentiles alike. They show the mystery of God hidden for ages, which now has been made known. They outline what we should believe. The last three chapters move on to look at the implications of the new life we have in Jesus. They focus on the church and then how we should respond as individuals and as families.

Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us. There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to one hope at your calling one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the Messiah's gift. (Ephesians 4:1-7, HCSB)

The Unity

We are called to fight for unity because:

There is _____, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, _____ one baptism, and one God.

The Unifier

The work of Christ brings all these things together. Jesus left the earth physically when he ascended, but did not leave us bereft and alone. He placed us in a family, left the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and gave us gifts to equip the church and build us up.

And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12, HCSB)

The Church is both unified and diverse. We are called to be one, but also, we all have a different part to play. There is a purpose behind these different roles, they are not there just to elevate certain people for the sake of it. They are given for the good of the whole body, to build up individuals and see God's kingdom extended. Jesus not only established the roles noted in verse 11, but also left us spiritual gifts which can be accessed by believers as a whole. These gifts are noted in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11.

It is interesting to note that 1 Corinthians 12 is another chapter that looks at unity in the body of Christ. We can see the link between spiritual gifts and unity in the body. The gifts are there to build up and cause the church to be strong and unified.

Jesus' Desire for Believers:

- That they are _____
"For the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12, HCSB)
- That they are _____
"Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness." (Ephesians 4:13, HCSB)
- That they are _____
"Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit." (Ephesians 4:14, HCSB)

A New Life Demands a New Lifestyle

The chapter progresses to show that our salvation should also make its mark on our characters and lifestyles.

Ephesians 4:17-32

Paul exhorts us to no longer walk in the ways of unbelievers. He describes them as having _____, hardened hearts, _____ and impure lives.

We are encouraged to put off the old self including:

- _____ (verse 25)
- _____ (verse 26)
- Corrupt talk (verse 29)
- _____ verse 31)

Instead, we are to "*be renewed in the spirit of our minds*" and put on the new self-including:

- _____ (verse 25)
- Honest Labour (verse 28)
- _____ (verse 28)
- _____ (verse 29)
- Treating each other with kindness and compassion (verse 31)
- _____ (verse 32)

Our faith should make a difference! We are called to be a radical people, a diverse but unified body using the gifts God has given us for the benefit of his body. We must fight for unity, as it is this that will set us apart as the body of Christ. As we daily put off the old self and put on the new, let us pray that God will work through us to draw people to Him and we will continue to see His kingdom extended.