

That all of them may be ONE

ONENESS GUIDE #6

TOWARD ONENESS

October 17, 2010

Ephesians 4:1-16

DESTINED FOR UNITY...
WITH GOD
In Jesus Christ Our Lord
WITH EACH OTHER
In The Church
WITH EACH OTHER
In Our Family

Unity: Practical Help Toward Oneness III

*...that all of them may be one,
Father, just as you are in me and
I am in you. May they also be in
us so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.*

- Jesus (John 17:21)

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to



Ephesians 4:1-16 - A Vital and Shared Purpose as the Body of Christ

[Ephesians 4:1-16 \(continued\)](#)

fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.



Self Study in Oneness for Week Six

YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH. - PSALM 119:105

Day **Look:** Read Acts 19 & Ephesians 4:1-16

- 1 Ask:** 1. On what basis did Demetrius the silversmith call the craftsmen of Ephesus to unite? (v.23 ff.) How did he motivate people to join with him? Against whom? For whom? What happened as a result? Were people unified in the theater? (v.32)
2. Why do you think Paul wanted to appear before the crowd in the Ephesian theater? (v.31) Why did his friends stop him?
3. How does Paul's experience in Ephesus (Acts 19) shed light on his call to unity in Ephesians 4:1-16?
4. Into whom did Paul Baptize (Acts 19:1-7)? Whom did he preach (19:8-10, 13)? On what basis and for what purpose does Paul call people to be unified in Ephesians 4:1-16?

Meditate: Around what ideals do you see people unifying today? When have you seen people band together to accomplish a mutually beneficial or valued goal? What kept these people together? How long did their unity last?

Pray: *Each day* - Look at the life of Jesus, and consider what He did effectively to call you into His family. Look at your life and ask Jesus what steps He wants you to take next to live in a manner "worthy of the calling you have received." Thank God for His Word & ask Him to help you understand and apply it this week.

Today - Ask God to comfort you in the midst of your fears and to give you wisdom concerning how others might take advantage of these to motivate you to behave in a manner *unworthy* of the calling we have received in Christ.

Day 2 **Look:** Read Ephesians 4:1-16 (esp. vv.1-3)

2 Ask: 1. Verse 4:1 is the theme verse for the last half of Ephesians (the part that deals with ethics and practical Christian living). What does Paul say we are to do? What is this “calling” (see Ephesians 3:2-6)?

2. What characteristics does Paul list that exemplify a life “worthy of the calling” we have received? How would each of these life characteristics help promote unity within God’s family and in His world?

Meditate: Which of the characteristics Paul lists do you find most challenging? Why?

Pray: *Today* - Pray about this trait you find most challenging. Ask God to help you grow more of this characteristic in you life.

Day 3 **Look:** Read Ephesians 4:1-16 (esp. vv.4-6)

3 Ask: What do each of these phrases mean to you:

1. “one body”	
2. “one Spirit”	3. “one hope”
4. “one Lord”	5. “one faith”
6. “one baptism”	7. “one God & Father of all”

Meditate: How does all this talk of “One” help us to think well in the midst of a culture that is constantly telling us we must not merely respect the beliefs and lifestyles of all kinds of people (pluralism - a good idea) but also accept and affirm all these ideas and practices as equally valid (moral/religious relativism - not such a good idea)?

Pray: *Today* - Pray for someone you know who does not believe in Jesus who is the “one Lord.” Ask God to reveal Himself to him/her and to call them into His family in such a way that they will hear and respond in faith.

Day 4 **Look:** Read Ephesians 4:1-16 (esp. vv.7-13)

4 Ask: 1. How do these verses demonstrate that “unity” does not mean “uniformity,” that we are not called to be some kind of “Christian Clones”?

2. How is the “calling” we receive from the Lord (4:1) the same for everybody? How is it different for each of us?

3. What is the purpose for the gifts that God gives, uniquely, to each one of His people (v.12-13)?

Meditate: What gifts do you see in yourself that are helpful for others? -- Are you good at sharing your faith (Evangelism)? Making God’s Word clear (Teaching)? Caring for others in need (Mercy)? Encouraging others toward healthy and faithful choices (Exhortation)? Something else?... What gifts do you see in others in your Small Group.

Pray: *Today* - Thank God for all the gifts you see at work for you and others in your Small Group & in your Church Family.

Day 5 **Look:** Read Ephesians 4:1-16 (esp. vv.14-16)

5 Ask: 1. How does our Oneness as God’s people along with our diversity of gifts help us not to be “tossed back and forth” by the imaginings and “deceitful scheming” of men?

2. How would things be different in your church if it looked more like the ideal Paul describes in vv.15-16?

Meditate: How can you be a more effective part of God’s work in your church to “prepare God’s people for works of service” and helping them grow into “the fullness of Christ?”

Pray: *Today* - Pray for God’s help to see how your gifts are vital to the church He has placed you in and to take the next steps He has for you to use these gifts for the sake of others and for His glory.



Notes

The Roman Empire was a dominant reality for people living throughout the Mediterranean world in the 1st-century when the letter to the Ephesians was written. It was a “Hellenistic” world because Alexander the Great’s infatuation with all things Greek had been passed down for three centuries so that Greek language and culture provided a unifying force for the empire in Paul’s time. Roman society featured a pyramid structure with 600 senate families resting above all the other classes and especially the lowly slaves (who made up half the population. So most people had a sense of alienation and powerlessness that led many to seek significance through the variety of “mystery religions” which borrowed from Egyptian and Oriental cult practices whose gods promised escape from fate, a place to belong and salvation through the mysteries shared only with those initiated into their secrets. The Christian Faith was seen as another novel superstition rising from the unenlightened lower classes. Yet, despite intense periods of murderous persecution, the Church grew dramatically & steadily, actually becoming the official state religion of the empire under Emperor Constantine in the 4th century.

“Live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” - This is the theme for the last half of Ephesians, & this phrase sheds heavenly light on the issue of personal integrity. Real integrity is not consistency between what I believe and what I do: It is consistency between what what God says (His call to me) and what I do! The popular phrase “Be true to yourself” or the personal defense “At least I’m being honest” do not lead us into real integrity and healthy living. We are always true to ourselves! We always express our true nature! To rise above our “true & natural” self-centered & sinful tendencies we need God’s help, and we do well to hold tightly to the helpful command of Ephesians 4:1 and the not-so-popular phrase “Be true to our Lord & God, Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 4:1-16 spells out what integrity means in the life of God’s church, in the relationships shared by His people. It means...

1) Unity (vv.2-6). Doing what is necessary to maintain our Oneness in Jesus Christ is our gift to God and helps others to see Him through us. Paul lists five characteristics of unity-producing people (v.2):

a. humility (absence of pride and self-assertion) **b. gentleness** (strength under control) **c. patience** (slowness to avenge or retaliate when others hurt us) **d. forbearance** (tolerance of the faults of others) and **e. love** (see 1 Corinthians 13). Integrity in the Church also means **2) Diversity** (vv.7-12). God’s people do not all look the same. The wonderful variety of spiritual gifts, special abilities, personalities and sensibilities present in God’s family is His gift to us. And integrity among God’s people, finally, means **3) Maturity** (vv.13-16). This is the essential goal and mutual effort (with one another and with the Holy Spirit) of God’s people: Moving toward what God has made us to be--people who know Jesus, the Son of God, and are becoming like Him.



Small Group Guide

Hearing About Us - 1. What are some organizations (other than church) that you have belonged to in your life? How were they meaningful to you? What purposes did/do they serve? 2. What is the most “together” group you’ve ever been a part of? What made it so?

Heeding God’s Word - 1. How does the goal of unity relate to the exhortation Paul gives to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received?” 2. What practical advice does Paul offer here about how we can promote unity in God’s church and in His world? 3. As time permits share what you learned and experienced in your personal Bible Study in Oneness this week.

Helping One Another in Prayer to God - Have each person name a “Oneness Trait” (vv.4:2-3) they would most like to see in their church family. When everyone has named a trait, have everyone pray for the person on his/her right that God would cause the trait they named to show, more and more, in them. Share additional prayer requests and pray for one another.

Outline for the Book of Ephesians

	Section One (Chapters 1-3)	Section Two (Chapters 4-6)
Focus:	Doctrine	Ethics
Style:	Preaching	Teaching
Topics:	The New Life in a New Society	The New Standards & New Relationships
Tone:	Indicative (these are the facts of our new situation)	Imperative (this is what we must now do in the light of this new reality)
Concern:	The Christian Faith	The Christian Life