

Note to Teams: The word order of verse 16 in the KJV differs from that of the CSB/NIV.

Being an Authentic Church  
Session 5  
May 12, 2024

*Serving in Christ*

**The Point:** We are to minister to one another and alongside one another.

**Session Passages:** Ephesians 4:1-7,11-16

**The Setting of Ephesians 4.** Though he was imprisoned due to his preaching (3:1; 4:1), Paul was still concerned about the believers in Ephesus. He was particularly troubled about the possibility of false teachers misleading the church.

### **Ephesians 4:1-7**

**Connection to The Point:** God makes us one but equips us with various gifts for His use.

**Therefore** (v. 1). In Ephesians 1–3 Paul had described the glorious nature of our salvation in Christ. In chapter 4 he transitioned the focus to how believers should live out that salvation.

**I, the prisoner** (v. 1). When Paul went to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey (Acts 21:1-15), he was attacked by a mob (21:26–22:22). That moment began about a four-year period of Roman imprisonment (22:23–28:31).

**In the Lord** (v. 1). Paul’s sufferings and imprisonments were due to his complete commitment to Jesus Christ and the preaching of His gospel of salvation.

**Urge** (v. 1). The Greek term translated *urge* means to call near in the sense of to invite, implore, and beseech.

**To walk** (v. 1). Paul used the Greek word translated *to walk* in a figurative way meaning “to live.”

**Worthy** (v. 1). Paul called the Ephesian believers to live their lives in such a way that the manner in which they thought, spoke, and acted was reflective of the salvation they had received and the Savior who had redeemed them (Eph. 1:18).

**Calling** (v. 1). God had called the Ephesian believers to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, thereby receiving the salvation available only in Him.

**Received** (v. 1). The Greek terms for both “calling” and *received* emphasize God’s initiative in summoning believers to participate in both the privileges and responsibilities of salvation—both individually and corporately as members of the body of Christ. Paul went on to list five qualities that characterize this type of life.

**Humility** (v. 2). The term refers to the humble attitude with which the believer is to serve the Lord and the submissive way the believer is to relate to other Christians in the sense of being the servant of all (Mark 10:43-45; John 13:1-15) and putting others’ needs ahead of one’s own (Phil. 2:3-4). Jesus used this term in its adjectival form to describe Himself—“humble in heart” (Matt. 11:29).

**Gentleness** (v. 2). The Greek term for *gentleness* is related in meaning to the word translated “humility” and refers to mildness. Synonyms include “kindness,” “considerateness,” and “meekness.” Jesus also used this word in its adjectival form to describe Himself (“lowly,” Matt. 11:29).

**Patience** (v. 2). The Greek word means “to be forbearing” (longsuffering) or “to have fortitude” (courage in the face of pain and adversity). The related adverb describes one who has a “long [enduring] temper.” The New Testament writers primarily used this word to direct believers in how they are to respond to others (see Gal. 5:22).

**Bearing with** (v. 2). The Greek term figuratively means “to hold oneself up against.” It can also be translated “to endure” or “to put up with.” Paul used the word to refer to enduring things such as persecutions and afflictions (“enduring,” 2 Thess. 1:4). It qualifies the previous term “patience”; believers are to live together with an attitude of mutual forbearance.

**In love** (v. 2). Earlier Paul had prayed that the Ephesian believers would be “rooted and firmly established in love” (Eph. 3:17), specifically God’s love in Christ (vv. 18-19). Regardless of how other believers fail them or hurt them, every Christian is to demonstrate the genuine love (God’s love) that God has shown to them in Christ (1 John 4:7-11,19) toward others. Jesus’s followers took the Greek word for *love (agape)* and elevated it to describe the kind of love that not only wants the best for the other person but also acts sacrificially for others.

**Making every effort** (v. 3). The sense of the Greek term implies a continuous and total effort. The word has the aspects of speed and diligence in regards to one’s efforts.

**To keep** (v. 3). This directive means to guard or hold on tightly to something or someone so as not to lose what one already possesses, for example, a prisoner (Matt. 27:36).

**The unity of the Spirit** (v. 3). The presence of *unity* among believers is produced through the working of the Holy Spirit.

**Through the bond of peace** (v. 3). The Greek refers to that which binds together, such as the ligaments of one’s body or the bonds of a prisoner. Paul used the phrase here figuratively in regard to how the Spirit enables believers to maintain the environment of peace He produces. When the qualities Paul previously listed are common, so is peace.

**One body** (v. 4). Paul often used the image of a physical body to stress both the unity of all believers and their dependence on Jesus as their Head (Eph. 1:22-23).

**One Spirit . . . one hope** (v. 4). Paul was referring back to “the calling” that his readers had received from God (v. 1). The presence of the Holy Spirit in believers’ lives assures us of our salvation (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14) and our hope (Rom. 5:1-5). The Greek term for *hope* carries the aspects of anticipation and confidence.

**One Lord** (v. 5). Paul stressed that the only One who is truly Lord is Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9; Phil 2:10-11; see Rev. 1:5; 19:16).

**One faith** (v. 5). Rather than correct doctrine, in this context *faith* refers to the absolute, common commitment Jesus requires from all His disciples (Rom. 10:9; see Matt. 16:24-26).

**One baptism** (v. 5). Paul did not indicate whether he was referring to baptism in the Spirit (Rom. 6:3-7; 1 Cor. 12:13) or water baptism (Acts 2:41). In any case, one naturally followed the other in the first-century church. Water baptism is done after people have repented of sin and confessed that Jesus is their Lord (v. 38; 16:31-33). It symbolizes the internal transformation that has occurred when a person puts faith in Christ.

**One God and Father of all** (v. 6). Paul repeatedly stressed that there is only one true “God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6). In referring to God as *Father of all* Paul was pointing to God’s unique relationship with those who have put their faith in His Son (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26; see Rom. 8:14-17).

**Above all and through all and in all** (v. 6). Paul included these three descriptions to confirm God's uniqueness as the one, true God. He is sovereign *above all* His creation (Ps. 29:10; while God created everything that exists, He remains separate from all creation). He is constantly working *through all* His creation, especially through those in His eternal kingdom, to bring glory to Himself (Luke 17:18; Rom. 1:21). He continues to work *in all* believers through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16).

**Grace** (v. 7). *Grace* is a freely given act to help someone in need. The Bible proclaims that God is the only true source of the grace we need (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:10). We obtain this gift of grace through our faith in Jesus (Rom. 5:1-2).

**According to the measure of Christ's gift** (v. 7). Besides the grace that enables believers to receive salvation (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 1:7-8), Paul also wrote of grace as the means by which God empowers us to serve others (1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 3:1-2). According to His sovereign will the Holy Spirit equips each believer with a grace gift or gifts to use in serving others (Rom. 12:6a; 1 Cor. 12:7). He alone chooses which gift(s) and how much power (*the measure*) is given to believers.

### **Ephesians 4:11-13**

**Connection to The Point:** God makes us one but equips us with various gifts for His use.

**Apostles** (v. 11). The word translated *apostles* literally means "those who are sent out." Jesus sent out the twelve men (*apostles*) He had called to follow Him (Matt. 10:1-4). Jesus also called Paul to be an apostle (1 Cor. 15:9-10). The New Testament seems to refer to other men as *apostles* (Acts 14:14). These men were called and equipped by the Holy Spirit (13:1-2) to share the gospel and lead believers in growing as disciples.

**Prophets** (v. 11). While New Testament prophets occasionally foretold coming events (Acts 21:10-11), their primary task was to declare that God's Messiah (Jesus) had come and instruct believers in God's truths. Paul included both "prophecy" and "apostles" among his lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10,28-29; 14:1).

**Evangelists** (v. 11). Though God calls and equips all believers to tell the good news about salvation through Jesus Christ, God equips some believers with a special ability to proclaim the truth of the gospel and to encourage their hearers to repent and believe. Acts 8 describes how Philip (later called "Philip the evangelist," Acts 21:8) went to Samaria and "proclaimed the Messiah" (8:5).

**Pastors and teachers** (v. 11). Many Bible commentators believe that *pastors* and *teachers* combine to indicate one role—the pastor-teacher. Some churches today refer to their spiritual leader as a teaching pastor. The word *pastor* means "shepherd" (Luke 2:8,15). Jesus referred to Himself as "the good shepherd" (John 10:11,14). In his first letter to pastor Timothy, Paul wrote that an "overseer" (pastor) must be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) and mentioned teaching as part of Timothy's duties (4:11,13).

**To equip . . . to build up** (v. 12). Jesus's purpose for the four types of church leaders (v. 11) was for them to teach and prepare every believer "for the work of ministry" (v. 12) in which believers humbly serve others, especially those within the church. The Greek term translated *to equip* means to make someone completely qualified for a task. It also has the meaning of being "fully mature" (2 Cor. 13:9). *To build up* refers to the act of constructing something.

**The saints** (v. 12). Literally, "the holy ones," the Greek term refers to those whom God has made holy (1 Cor. 3:17) by calling them to salvation (Eph. 1:4).

**The body of Christ** (v. 12). By *the body of Christ* Paul meant the church (Eph. 1:22-23). As all believers grow and mature, they are able to serve others and work together. The local church grows as it reflects Christ's character (4:13) and increases in numbers (Acts 2:41; 9:31).

**Until we all reach** (v. 13). The Greek term for *reach* means to arrive at a destination, either literally or figuratively. Here Paul used it to mean reaching three non-material goals. Note his continued emphasis that his message applies to all believers ("each one of us," v. 7; "the saints," v. 12). His use of the word *until* does not suggest that believers will fully reach these goals during our earthly lives (Phil. 3:10-12).

**Unity in the faith** (v. 13). The Greek text of verse 13 has three prepositions that point to three goals. The first goal includes two parts: *unity in the faith* is the first part. Paul earlier stressed "unity of the Spirit" (v. 3). The Holy Spirit unites all believers in the body of Christ, the church. As they grow in their understanding of the teachings of the gospel (*the faith*) and live those teachings out in their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, this *unity* continues to grow stronger.

**In the knowledge of God's Son** (v. 13). This is the second part of the first goal. The Greek word for *knowledge* means to acquire information about someone or something, emphasizing the process through which such knowledge is attained. Paul probably was saying that believers should do more than simply know *about* Jesus (*God's Son*); they should also know Him *through* a personal relationship.

**Growing into maturity** (v. 13). This is the second goal. A more literal translation of the Greek is "to a mature man." The word "man" is inclusive for both genders. The Greek word for *maturity* indicates that which is "complete" or even "perfect" (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 13:10). In this context Paul was speaking about spiritual maturity.

**With a stature measured by Christ's fullness** (v. 13). This is the third goal. The key question is what *measure* should the believer use as a standard for comparison of his or her spiritual maturity (*stature*). Paul's answer was *Christ's fullness* (see Col. 2:19). After Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He told them that He had given them "an example" (John 13:15). The task of the leaders Jesus gives to His church is to enable believers to grow toward this level of maturity.

## **Ephesians 4:14-16**

**Connection to The Point:** We are to use the gifts God has given us to minister alongside others.

**No longer be little children** (v. 14). Paul began this section with a focus on the negative. He had already said that the goal is spiritual maturity (v. 13). Unfortunately after having received salvation, some believers fail to consistently continue to grow spiritually (1 Cor. 3:2-3; Heb. 5:12-14).

**Tossed by the waves . . . blown around by every wind** (v. 14). All of Paul's missionary journeys had taken him out to sea, so he knew firsthand about the power of the wind to blow the waves into huge swells that toss a ship about (Acts 27). Dangerous spiritual forces and false teachings could have similar effects on believers.

**Teaching** (v. 14). Paul knew that many false teachings had developed among the churches. He often warned other leaders to guard their flocks against such disruptive and dangerous false doctrines (Acts 20:29-31).

**By human cunning** (v. 14). The Greek word for *cunning* originally meant gambling with dice and came to mean fraud or trickery. Paul's point was that these false teachers were motivated by selfish gain. They offered up false doctrines to entice people to follow them and then exploited them (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

**With cleverness** (v. 14). The Greek word for *cleverness* literally means “ready to do anything.” Paul also used this term to warn the Corinthian believers against false teachers by comparing those teachers to the serpent’s “cunning” in tempting Eve (2 Cor. 11:3).

**Techniques of deceit** (v. 14). The verb form of the Greek word for *deceit* means either “to cause someone to wander” or “to be led astray.” The term describes the result—to have wandered from the truth. The sense here is that the false teachers practice their cleverness in an atmosphere of deceit.

**But** (v. 15). This conjunction points to the contrast between the negative, destructive environment that Paul described in verse 14 with the positive situation he was encouraging the believers to develop.

**Speaking the truth** (v. 15). The Ephesian believers were to speak the truth of the gospel. God’s truth was always to be apparent in all they said and did.

**In love** (v. 15). Echoing verse 2, Paul wrote that *love* was to characterize the manner in which the believers live their lives. People can emphasize correct doctrine (“the truth”) without love in their hearts. Paul’s most eloquent statement about the necessity of love being the church’s constant umbrella for all they say and do is found in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

**Let us grow** (v. 15). Throughout this passage Paul stressed that the Ephesian believers should not remain immature “little children” in regard to their faith (v. 14). Rather they should be constantly growing and maturing in Christ, both individually and collectively (v. 13).

**In every way** (v. 15). This stresses that all believers should be maturing in every area of their spiritual lives (2 Pet. 1:3-8).

**Into him who is the head—Christ** (v. 15). God has established Jesus over the church (1:22), whose members are to serve Him and carry out His mission. As members of Jesus’s body continue to mature, they will be better able to carry out the will of their Lord.

**From him the whole body** (v. 16). As the human body is a single whole made up of many parts, so too the church is made up of many members but is united as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). As the brain gives commands to the body, so too Jesus gives directions to all the members of His body the church.

**Fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament** (v. 16). The body has many parts, and they are all connected and held together in the framework of bones, joints, ligaments, and tendons (Col. 2:19). Jesus not only guides the church; He also holds all the members together in unity of purpose.

**Promotes the growth of the body for building itself up** (v. 16). Christ provides all that is necessary for the body of Christ (the church) to grow and mature as its members live out their faith both individually and corporately.

**In love** (v. 16). For the third time in this passage (vv. 2,15) Paul stressed that this growth under Christ’s control is to take place in an atmosphere characterized by the highest kind of love, the love of God (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10).

**By the proper working of each individual part** (v. 16). Though the body of Christ has many parts, through Jesus they all fit together and work together in unity of His purpose (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12). As the believers in each local body work together under Christ’s direction and through His enabling power, the “growth of the body” (Eph. 4:16) in love will occur naturally.