

# Unity and Maturity

## TEACHING NOTES

### KEY VERSES

Ephesians 4:1-16

### KEY THEMES

Unity with diversity  
A mature church



### Our will (Ephesians 4:1)

The calling

The foundation



### God's will (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Know, Consider, Surrender



### Unity (Ephesians 4:4-6)

*For there is one **body** and one **Spirit**, just as you have been called to one glorious **hope** for the future. There is one **Lord**, one **faith**, one **baptism**, one **God** and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

One body

One Spirit

One hope

One Lord

One faith

One baptism

One God

 **What gift(s) have I been given? (Ephesians 4:7)**

 **Gifts for the Church (Ephesians 4:11)**

Apostle = someone who was taught directly by Jesus Christ

Prophet = someone who heard from God and shared His truth

Evangelist = someone who shares the Gospel

Pastor = someone who looks after the Church

Teacher = someone who teaches the Church

 **Reach, Equip, Send (Ephesians 4:12)**

 **Maturity is the goal (Ephesians 4:13)**

 **Marks of maturity (Ephesians 4:14-15)**

 **Our part (Ephesians 4:16)**

**Lesson objective:** *To recognize that God's plan is for us to grow on into maturity*

## PERSONAL STUDY

## Session 1

**Prepare your heart and mind**

Begin this time of study with prayer. Ask God to help you push away distractions and focus on Him. Ask Him to bless this time by providing clarity and revealing truth.

**Read Ephesians 4:1-3**

*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*

According to this passage, what are some ways the body of Christ is called to exercise unity?

**Read Ephesians 4:4-6**

*For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

This passage says there is:

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

One \_\_\_\_\_

Reading the first three verses of Ephesians 4 might lead us to feel like we have to try to be more unified by our own efforts, but we all know that won't get us very far. We can try, but we'll fail, become frustrated, and we might even hinder unity in the process. But the next three verses of this chapter help give some framework to this unity. They show us that God is the one who unifies. Oneness and unity come from Him. It is only through Him that we can experience genuine unity.

Just like this passage repeats God's oneness, it also repeats God's all-ness.

This passage says that God is:

\_\_\_\_\_ all  
 \_\_\_\_\_ all  
 \_\_\_\_\_ all  
 \_\_\_\_\_ all

God's oneness and all-ness are the source and sustaining power of our unity. Take a minute to reflect on these characteristics of God and what they mean in terms of our unity. Write down any thoughts or reflections in the space below.



### Read Ephesians 4:11-16

*Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Finishing up this section of chapter four, Paul continues to teach the Ephesians, and us, about unity by using the example of a body. Through Christ, the head, we, the body, are unified. But this is a concept we have a hard time living out.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, *"it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning."* The truth of that statement can still be seen today. To us the body of Christ is our *Equipping the Church* small group or WCC. We think small but God thinks big. To God the body of Christ is all the churches of Warsaw... America... the world.

What are some ways you have seen others cause disunity in the body of Christ?

How have you contributed to disunity?

What would it look like for the church to truly be unified “*in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son*” like Paul says in verse 13?

How do you see aspects of Christ-centered unity at work in your life and the lives of those around you?

What are some steps you could take to encourage unity in the body of Christ?

**Key verse**

Put to memory Ephesians 4:2-3. Place the provided scripture card somewhere you’ll see it throughout the day.

*Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*

**Prayer time**

Close this time of study in prayer. Ask God to continue to teach you about His unity. Ask Him to reveal where He’d like to grow you in your understanding of unity and some practical ways you can celebrate and add to the unity of the body of Christ.

## Session 2

### Prepare your heart and mind

Don't skip this step. Take a minute or two to get quiet before the Lord. Ask Him to help you focus on what He has for you in this time.

### For all it's worth

Paul writes this letter from prison. The way he lived out his faith was bold which stirred people up. Paul understood that God had a calling on his life, which meant any difficulty he faced would be worth it. From his cell, Paul strongly urges believers to press forward in their calling no matter what obstacles stand in their way. In fact, by doing so, they would continue to grow in their faith. God's desire is for every believer to be mature, reaching the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The question of "why?" has been answered in Ephesians 1-3. Now Ephesians 4 is turning to the questions of "what?" and "how?"

Ephesians 1-3 teaches us that in Christ...

- We have salvation and are His children
- We have His Spirit
- God's will for all people has been revealed
- We are made one and made alive in Him
- We have everything we need to walk with Him

### Learning to walk

From this point forward Ephesians is mainly practical. Read through the first half of chapter 4 to get a sense of the next steps God wants to take in your life.



### Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Based on these verses, what does God want for believers now that they are forgiven and made new in Christ?

Make a note of what we are given in verses 1-16 which helps us grow to maturity. Find at least two places where you see Christ has "given" or "gave".

Where are you in the maturation process (a.k.a. sanctification)? Do you see how you have grown in Christ over the past year?

To get a real sense of where you are, find a few of the practical beliefs or behaviors in verses 1-3, and 14-16 and write them below. Which of these areas would you say are your strengths? Which one or two are weaknesses for you?

Finish the following sentences:

*I believe that in Christ I can grow to be more \_\_\_\_\_*

\_\_\_\_\_.

*I believe He has given me \_\_\_\_\_*

*as a spiritual gift.*

*One way I can bless the church with this gift is \_\_\_\_\_*

\_\_\_\_\_.

### **Key verse**

Continue working to memorize Ephesians 4:2-3. Attempt to write them out from memory below.

### **Pray and respond**

While prayer is the end of our study, it is really a beginning. Thank God for the spiritual maturity you have seen Him develop in you. Ask God to help you grow in your areas of weakness. Pray for God to give you opportunities this week to face your weaknesses and depend on Him to strengthen and guide you. Remember this prayer and be prepared for God to answer it in your life.

## PARENT GUIDE

### Activity

You'll be building a tower together as a family.

Before you begin, collect some building materials. A couple suggestions:

Plastic cups and popsicle sticks

or

Spaghetti and marshmallows

Have everyone in the family participate in building a tower together. Explain that you're going to work as a team to build the tallest freestanding tower with the materials you collected. Encourage your family to use all of the resources and to involve everyone in the planning and building process. Take about 15 minutes to construct your tower.

### Discussion

When you are finished, discuss these questions:

How well did we work together as a team?

What did you do to help build the tower?

What could we do differently to build a taller tower next time?

If we each used the materials to build our own towers, would we have been able to build as tall of a tower as the one we built together? By working together, do you think it helped us build a bigger tower?

Were there times when you didn't always agree with the others on the best way to build our tower?

Share with your kids:

As a family when we work together, in unity, it shows. Building the tower is one example of how working together can help us do great things. As followers of Jesus, we are unified in one body.

Working together as a body allows each of us to use the gifts God gave us to serve God together.

Spend some time together as a family in prayer. Talk to God about growing in unity with Jesus.



**ADDITIONAL STUDY****Read Ephesians 4:17-5:14****Observation**

*(Who? When? Where? Why? What does it say? What do I notice?)*

**Interpretation**

*(What are the key themes or truths? What is the writer's intended meaning? What is the context?  
What questions do I have?)*

**Application**

*(How do I apply it? What does this mean for me?)*

