

Studying the Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians is about learning to let who we are in Christ, shape how we perform in life.

Ephesians Study 7 (⊕ 50 min.)



Warm Up (⊕ 6 min.)

1. Greeting / Welcome

2. Prayer Requests (try to balance the amount of time between prayer and / or testimony by limiting the amount of prayer requests and/or time for testimony sharing.)

3. Testimony Sharing (*Optional* - prior to the group study time, ask one person to share for 3-5 minutes on how the recent truths being studied have impacted their life. Remember: *authenticity is the key* - What have you (or a group member you've asked to testify) shared lately that gives insight into your journey? Try to share things pertaining to the recent themes of the study.)



Overview of Today's Study (⊕ 1 min.)

Text: Read to Eph. 4:1-16

Lesson Title: *Unity Is By Choice*

Lesson Theme: Christians must choose to behave in a way that shows Christ's presence in their lives. Putting selfishness aside and choosing to put others' interests above our own will preserve unity in a church family.

By the End of the Study today, we want to be able to answer:

Today's Key Question 🔑



How does a church maintain unity as differing people continue to join it?

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1. **Connecting the Studies** (⊕ 5 min.)

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul established who we are in Christ and the enormous potential that exists due to the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul now challenges the Ephesians to have their external behavior reflect the holiness of their reborn souls.

The core of sin is selfishness. The solution to overriding self satisfying patterns on our brains is found in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. And while the Holy Spirit is continually at work in us to prompt holy decisions, He will not disregard our free will. God leaves the choice to live holy up to us.

The last verse of the Book of Judges says,

*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. **Judges 21:25***

Seeking one's own interests above God's and others' interests results in division. When we choose to place our own needs and wants above what God has chosen for our lives, our entire foundation for living life is askew. Operating from pride-filled selfishness is destructive to relationships at all levels. The remedy for this is found in the first part of Ephesians chapter 4.

Today, we will see that the solution to selfish division within a group of believers is a two part remedy.

One part is a chosen *mindset* and the other is a practiced *task*.

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2. Bible Passage Study (⌚ 20 min.)

Read Eph. 4:1-16

Study Topic 1 – The Mindset

Paul's Challenge to the Ephesians' Behavior – the Mindset Christians Are to Have. Eph. 4:1-3

A. What do these verses tell us?

1. Paul wants the Ephesians to behave in the physical world in a way that is worthy of what they've been called to (4:1).
2. The behavior Paul is speaking of pertains to the attitude the Ephesians have toward each other. He wants their behavior to be characterized by *lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and to forbear one another in love.*
3. Paul's challenge to their behavior is with the objective of *guarding the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

B. What do these verses mean? 4:1-3

1. Our relationship with God is made possible by the making holy of our soul spirits when we believe in Christ. *Walking worthy of the life we've been called to* is behaving in a God-like or holy manner.

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2. Our treatment of each other should model:

- a. lowliness - (Greek) having a humble opinion of one's self
- b. meekness - (Greek) gentleness, mildness
- c. longsuffering - (Greek) slowness in avenging wrongs
- d. forbearance in love (Greek) to bear with being wronged

3. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit – the Spirit will strive toward unity of believers. Believers should protect unity and not allow personal agendas to destroy it.

C. How should these verses impact my life? 4:1-3

1. Part of holy living is my attitude toward fellow Christians. I am responsible to let Christ's mindset dominate my thoughts toward others in my church.

2. I am to look beyond style, method, personality and personal preference and compassionately "put up with" those I don't naturally get along with.

3. When regarding relationships with fellow Christians, the guarding question should be: *Is the way I'm acting toward this person causing unity or causing division?*



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Study Topic 2 – The Task

Paul's Challenge to the Ephesians' Behavior – the Task Christians Are to Practice. Eph. 4:4-16

A. What do these verses tell us?

1. There is one purpose for all believers in the church: *to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ* (4:15).
2. Each believer is to be involved in this purpose (4:13).
3. Believers will have differing roles in the execution of this mission (4:11).

B. What do these verses mean? 4:4-16

1. God's design for the church was to have unity (4:4-6). As believers mature they are brought into unity by the common pursuit of the church's purpose.
2. As individual believers **mature**, they understand the need to look beyond the things that do not matter and focus on **eternal** issues.
3. Growing Christians seek God's will on where they fit in a given church group based on: His leading; opportunities that exist; and personal abilities.



C. How should these verses impact my life? 4:4-16

I am responsible to keep my attitude in check:


1. Is my behavior toward fellow believers protecting unity or causing division?
2. Am I busy finding where I **belong** in this church or am I busy **criticizing** the work of others?



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3.  Group Discussion (⊕ 15 min.) Based on the time remaining, here are some suggested discussion questions. You may or may not have time enough for all of them.

(Try to facilitate the group's discussion and not do most of the talking during this time.)

1. When is separation within the members of a church family recommended? Separation from a fellow believer is recommended when sin or the potential for sinful activity is present. *Christians have varying convictions about life. If hanging around a particular believer and practicing what they're doing leaves you feeling guilty, you probably should not spend time with that person. If an individual Christian's well being is being harmed or tempted toward sinful behavior i.e. participation in like sin, or revenge, or depression etc., separation from the offending party is recommended.*



2. Am I supposed to just overlook situations when I am wronged? No. We must choose to forgive as Christ chose to forgive. *If the situation requires confrontation then at the right time and place, kindly tell the person about the situation. There must be a willingness to forgive regardless of the person's response. There must be no "score keeping." There must be no avenging oneself.*

3. Am I supposed to "get along with" everyone in my church? *It would be unusual to "get along with" everyone in a church body. However, we must work not to offend or hurtfully exclude those we don't naturally click with.*

4. How do I find where I belong in my church? *Past experiences where skills have been applied successfully are a good place to start. If a person is new to church culture, time is needed to acclimate. Once the person thinks God is prompting them to get involved in a work, speaking to the ministry director for the particular work will provide an idea of what areas have openings. Then it's a matter of matching up the skills with the needs. After being involved in an area for a period of time, the Christian will have a sense that it is a good fit or not for them and can stay in that position or seek God's leading for a better fit.*

5. What if I'm too busy to be involved in my church? *Involvement in the local church body is an imperative in the Bible. If a Christian's life is too busy to be involved in their church, it is recommended that they ask God to help them re-prioritize their lives in order to fit ministry participation into their life.*

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4. ↔ Review / Preview (⊕ 3 min.) (What is the group learning to do that they can repeat when they are away from the group or this study is completed?)

🔑 **If You Forget Everything Else, Remember...**

How does a church maintain unity as differing people continue to join it?

A church maintains unity when individuals choose to overlook **personal differences** and seek **personal involvement** in accomplishing God's purpose.



Getting Ready for Next Week

- 1. How's your alone time with God?** Prayer & Bible Reading
- 2. For further study,** compare Christ's example in Phil. 2:1-8
- 3. Next week:** "Off With the Old", and "On with the New."

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