



WEEK 1

Growing Up In Christ



GATHER

As You Begin, Pray Together

Read God's Holy Word

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

¹ 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 to one hope when 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 took many captives and gave gifts to his people." 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 fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his 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 people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of 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.

Icebreaker Question

Unity in Diversity: What is the strangest food combination you love that shouldn't work on paper, but somehow tastes amazing together?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

A Short Summary of Key Ideas from the Passage

As we turn the page to the second half of the letter, Paul turns from what God has done to how we are called to live. Because the church has been made one in Christ, believers are to practice humility, patience, and love in a way that protects and promotes that unity rather than fractures it. Christ has given different gifts to different people, not so that some may be important and others unnecessary, but so that the whole body may grow together into maturity. The goal is a church that is stable, truthful, and increasingly reflects the fullness of Christ.

OPENING THE WORD

We Return to the Scriptures as God's Living Word to Us Today

1. Does anything stand out or surprise you from the passage?
2. v.1 marks a shift in Ephesians. Paul turns from what *God has done* to what *we must be and do*. Eugene Peterson's *The Message* relays this shift well: "In light of all this, here's what I want you to do." How would you describe the relationship between what God has done and how we live?
3. What are the five traits Paul urges Christians to embody in v.2? Why would he name these?
4. Seven times in vv.4-6 Paul uses the word "one." What's his point? Why does this matter?
5. In vv.7-13, Paul turns from "all of us" to "each of us." How does he demonstrate that unity is not uniformity? What kind of diversity does Paul bring up here?
6. Deep dive: In v.8, Paul quotes from Psalm 68, which recounts God's previous salvation and calls Him to rescue His people again. The quotation in v.18 pictures a triumphant God ascending Mount Zion with a train of captive rebels. Paul sees Jesus' exaltation as a further fulfillment, having conquered the spiritual principalities and now giving His gifts – the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts – to His people (see especially Peter's words in Acts 2:33). How does this background deepen your understanding of vv.7-13?
7. What is the purpose for which the diverse spiritual gifts have been given according to vv.14-16?

Pause to Reflect on This Quote

"It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning."

— Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

What is the Spirit Saying to Us Through the Word?

1. Where do you see division in our culture? Why do you think unity is so rare?
2. Paul's instruction to be "completely humble" was profoundly countercultural. It's been written, "lowliness was much despised in the ancient world. The Greeks never used their word for humility in a context of approval, still less of admiration." Why do you think this was? How is this similar to 21st century America?
3. In verses 2-3, Paul sets forth five qualities necessary for Christian unity within the family of God. Which of these five qualities do you find yourself struggling with? How could you seek to develop maturity – and thus, these qualities – in your own life?
4. Paul grounds his imperatives to "attain" (v.13) and "maintain" (v.3) unity in its givenness (vv.4-6). Why does Paul say Christians share a unity? (Need a hint? See Ephesians 2:14-18)
5. How does the gospel give a unique foundation for unity across divisions of ethnicity, culture, politics, and more? Or to switch metaphors, how can we grow as the body because Christ is our "head"? (Consider the reasons for why division exists and how seeing yourself as a sinner saved by grace would change that equation.)
6. As we've seen, the Church is united but not uniform. Jesus has given each of us gifts to grow and build the Church. Read some of the New Testament lists of gifts and consider what gift you may have: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28; and 1 Peter 4:10-11 (these lists aren't exhaustive). How could you employ your gift for the Church?
7. Many Christians have the idea that church leaders are the ones who "do ministry." How does that square with vv.11-13? Paul's vision for church leaders is actually to equip everyone else in the Church for the work of ministry, whether in their relationships, vocation, or even recreation! How does this challenge your perspective on who does ministry? What could "living on mission" look like for you?

INVITATIONS & CHALLENGES

Here are a Few Ways the Spirit Might Be Inviting or Challenging Us to Respond This Coming Week

- In the first three chapters, Paul marveled at God's eternal plan to unify "all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (1:10) and His intent to make known His "manifold wisdom" through the Church! In ch. 4, Paul speaks of the indissoluble unity of the Church (vv.4-6). But strikingly, he exhorts his readers to "make every effort" to maintain this Spirit-given unity! Apparently, this unity is a certain theology reality, but we have to constantly work at making it a visible reality.
 - Inside our walls: What's one way we can work on attaining this unity at First Pres?
 - Outside our walls: What's one way we need to work on this unity with other churches in Houston, even those that look or worship differently than we do?

- Whether you're exploring Christianity or have been following Jesus for years, we need to acknowledge the division in the Church today. The Church has been fractured by politics, theology, and scandal. Yet Paul was writing to a church full of centuries old Jewish-Gentile hostility, among other problems. What makes the Church different, however, is its cornerstone and head: Jesus Christ, who is truly "gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11:29). Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' gentle and patient love toward you, despite the ways you have broken the bonds of peace. How does experiencing His unearned grace give you the power to offer that same gentle grace to someone you naturally disagree with?
 - Practice of Jesus: The biblical vision for the Church is a united body of brothers and sisters, bearing with one another, speaking the truth in love, and maturing into the fullness of Christ. So, your invitation is to practice the spiritual discipline of Fellowship (deep, intentional community). What is the biggest barrier that usually keeps our conversations with other Christians on a "surface level" (e.g., busyness, fear of judgment, or just not knowing how to start)? How can you take a small step toward deeper fellowship with a Christian friend or group this week? What would it look like for us to truly encourage and equip each other rather than just "hanging out"?
-

PRAY

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge there is one God and Father of all, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one Spirit. You are over all and through all and in all. We ask that You would enable us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received. Make us into gentle and humble people, and help us to be patient and forbearing, loving others in all that we do. Thank you for the gifts You have given to us to equip one another, so that we can grow in our faith and knowledge of You. Forgive us for the ways we have knowingly and unknowingly been led astray by deceitful teaching. Holy Spirit, send us out to speak the truth in love, making Jesus Christ known to a divided world. Amen.

PLAYLIST

Scan the QR Code to Aid in Your Worship Throughout the Series

(Playlist can also be found on the Small Groups Guides page on the fpchouston.org website)



SONGS FOR THIS WEEK

This Week, Take Some Time as a Group or on Your Own to Dwell on the Truths of the Gospel Through Singing or Listening

[His Mercy is More](#) – Getty Music

[Make Us One](#) – Matt Maher, Chris Tomlin

[May the Mind of Christ, My Savior](#) – Kate Barclay Wilkinson

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

June 1	June 2	June 3	June 4	June 5	June 6
Psalm 68	John 17	Romans 12	1 Corinthians 12	Philippians 2:1-11	Revelation 7:9-17