



WEEK 4 || *EPHESIANS 4:1-16*

WHO ARE WE TOGETHER?

So far in Ephesians we've seen that God has united Jews and Gentiles who trust Jesus into one big family—the Church. But life in a blended family can be tough when the members come from such different backgrounds. And so for the rest of the letter, Paul gives the Gentile Christians some very practical instructions on how to live out their new lives.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6.

- How does Paul summarise the way the Ephesians should live in verse 1?
- Remembering the members of this church have radically different backgrounds, what is this 'worthy living' going to look like in practical terms?
- Verses 4-6 go on to talk more about the "calling" the Ephesians received. What small word is repeated, and for what reason?

List the things they share in common.

ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

Whatever their background the Ephesian Christians are called to be part of the one body of Jesus, through the same Holy Spirit. They all share the same hope of being in heaven together and they're all serving the same "one" God. In their unity there's no place for fights or division. Instead of tearing the body apart, they should be building it up.

1. How do you cope with people in church who are different from you?

2. How would Paul suggest you treat them?

We've seen that unity is one of the key things Paul wants the Ephesians to aim for. He amplifies the idea in the following verses. **Read Ephesians 4:7-16 (on the right)**. Paul describes the resurrected Jesus as a triumphant Roman General distributing the spoils of victory.

3. What gifts is the risen Lord handing around (v11)?

4. Why did Jesus give these people to 'the Saints' (ie original Jewish Christians who were the 'first members' of the church)? What did he then want them to do (v12)?

5. What four goals does Paul have for us all (v13)?
 - _____ in the faith
 - _____ of the Son of God
 - Becoming _____
 - Having the _____ of Christ

Ephesians 4:7-16

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 captive 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 the Saints 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.

6. What will a church look like when people are not using their gifts or being prepared to build up others (v14)?

7. What will result when everyone is playing their proper part? (v15-16)?

8. Notice the phrase 'in love' appears twice in the last few verses. What's the connection?

When it comes to church, if you were there first, you're there to serve those who come next! That's Paul's point. The prophets, pastors, teachers—gifts from God—were given to coach and train the first members of the church to reach out and build up others. It's a radical thought. If you're already part of the church, you're there to play a part in reaching and including and encouraging others. Your leaders are not there to do that work—their job is to coach you!

PUTTING THE MINI IN MINISTRY

In the article 'Putting the Mini in Ministry'* (GoThereFor.com), Laura Blyth suggests a number of small things we can all do to make a big difference in our churches. Here's a small selection from her list of 17 options.

1. **Welcome and talk to people.** It doesn't matter if they're new or have been around for ages, no-one should be on their own at church. Sit next to the new person, or someone you don't normally spend time with. Ask questions and listen well! Nothing helps feelings of belonging like being genuinely interested in the lives of those we speak to.

2. **Notice who's not at church.** Call or text them to ask if they're okay, to say they were missed.

3. **Talk to the kids.** We are a body of believers made up of people big and small, young and old. Ask the kids what they learnt in children's church, what they enjoy, or what they are looking forward to. Being noticed by a 'big person' is a great way to show our little ones that they are valued.

* This is a really practical article. It's worth reading all the other tips. There's a link at our *Who Are You* series page.



4. **Get together outside church.** Invite someone over for lunch after church, or meet someone for coffee beforehand. Ask others to join you for a morning run, or to watch a movie. Share your life and your resources in a relaxed way.
5. **Don't be on time: be early!** It's discouraging when church begins and hardly anyone is there. The musicians arrived early to rehearse, and the set-up team worked diligently to make sure there are no interruptions during the service. Being early is a simple way of encouraging and acknowledging the effort of those whose ministry began before some of us were even out of bed. It's also great to be there ready to welcome newcomers, who often arrive early.
6. **Sit close to the front.** A healthy community should be willing to sit near one another. Additionally, leaving spare seats at the back allows for new people or latecomers to find a seat with minimal disruption.
7. **Serve willingly and faithfully.** Whatever your gifts and abilities, seek opportunities to use them. If the need is not obvious, ask. If you're on a roster, remember that dependability in service is an act of obedience to God and an act of love toward your church, so if you can't serve one week, find a replacement—early! Playing a new song on Sunday? Be familiar with it before rehearsal. On set-up? Be on time. It's no use arriving late once most of the hard tasks are done. Remember, cultivating a godly heart in service is about loving others even when we don't 'feel' like it.
8. **Extend grace to others.** Anyone can forget they were on the roster, or make an inappropriate remark, or rebuke another harshly. Just remember how you would like to be treated. Be forgiving.

As a group, discuss these, and choose some to work on together on Sunday as we meet for church.

Growth Groups don't meet next week because it's the Ekka Holiday on Wednesday.