

Small Group Study Guide

Peace with Imperfect People Is Possible
Ephesians 4:1-16

August 29, 2010

Leader's Notes

PLEASE NOTE: These “Leader’s Notes” are a resource to the Small Group Leader to help you in preparing for this study. They are meant to be supplemental. You do not need to cover all the information in these notes with your group. They are simply provided as a resource to you.

Welcome and Introduction:

- Encourage group members to bring their study guide with them that they use on Sunday to take notes on the sermon, but also have extra copies available in case they forget.
- Open with prayer.
- Share with your group this week about ONE GREAT DAY on Saturday, September 25th. You should have received information from Stuart Borders by now, if you have not...please email him immediately so we can add your email to our list. sborders@lhb.org.

A Closer Look:

The following notes are to help you better understand the passages you will be looking at in this study.

Notes from ESV Study Bible on Ephesians 4:1-16:

Eph. 4:1 prisoner. Paul's imprisonment for the sake of the gospel is **for the Lord** (see 3:1). His exhortations have great power, since he himself has taken these matters seriously enough to suffer confinement in the Lord's service. Christians are to live **in a manner worthy** of the adoption, holiness, and unity to which they were **called** (see 1:4-5; 4:4).

Eph. 4:1-16 Unity of the Body of Christ. Paul now turns to exhortation (with three subsections in vv. 1-6, 7-10, and 11-16) based upon the truths he has been teaching—a common format for his letters, in which doctrinal truths are stated first (here, chs. 1-3), then application to life is built on that doctrine (chs. 4-6). The exhortations of Scripture become empty moralism without this gospel foundation.

Eph. 4:1-6 Exhortation to Unity. Paul exhorts the church to unity based on the truths of the one God and his one work of salvation.

Eph. 4:2 Humility was regarded as distasteful by the pagan world of Paul's day. Pride was more highly prized. All of the virtues mentioned—humility, **gentleness**, **patience**, and most of all, **love**—were displayed in Christ's own character and are to be evident in the daily walk of every Christian.

Eph. 4:3 Peace is a state of reconciliation and love and therefore acts as a **bond** to unite believers in Christ. Believers do not create **unity** but are to preserve the unity already established.

Eph. 4:4 Spirit. Just as a human body has one spirit that animates it, so Christ's body, the church, is enlivened by one Holy Spirit who enlivens Christians to eternal life. **one hope.** Christians do not have separate “hopes” but are together called to eternal life and to enjoy God forever in resurrection glory. They are also called to express that unity this side of eternity. On the church as a **body**, see Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–31.

Eph. 4:5 One Lord refers to Jesus Christ. **One faith** refers to the doctrinal truths Christians commonly confess. “One Spirit” (v. 4), “one Lord [Christ]” (v. 5), and “one God and Father” (v. 6) constitute a Trinitarian formula. **one baptism.** Christians have disagreed about the proper mode of baptism beginning in the early history of the church. “One baptism” here, however, may refer to the baptism of all believers into one body (as described in 1 Cor. 12:13), which is the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit when one becomes a genuine believer in Christ. If this view is correct, water baptism would be an outward sign of the inward reality of the believer being in Christ as the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5, 8; Titus 3:5). There is therefore a profound spiritual unity of all genuine believers who are “in Christ” (see John 17:21, 23), founded on “one faith” in “one Lord,” irrespective of denominational differences. Others hold that the reference here is to water baptism, but would disagree concerning the proper mode.

Eph. 4:6 over all ... through all ... in all. God is omnipresent (see Ps. 139:7–12; Isa. 66:1). Thus the Christian church is “one body” (Eph. 4:4), wherever its separate congregations may be found throughout the world (see Rom. 3:30).

Eph. 4:7 Grace ... according to the measure of Christ's gift does not refer to different levels of *saving* grace but of grace given to serve Christ's church. To hold an office in Christ's church (see 3:2; 4:11–16) requires a special calling from Christ himself, who rules his body as its head (see 1:22; 4:15; 5:23).

Eph. 4:7–10 The Different Gifts. Paul describes diverse gifts in the church. These come from the ascended Christ.

Eph. 4:8 it says. Paul cites Ps. 68:18, where the one who ascends is the triumphant Lord God. Paul sees this as referring to Christ Jesus in his resurrection as head of the church. **gifts.** In Ps. 68:18, the divine victor is seen “receiving gifts among men,” but Paul adapts the passage to his purposes (as NT authors sometimes do in citing the OT) to show that Christ **gave** gifts to his people from his spoils of victory (interestingly, ancient Syriac and Aramaic translations of Ps. 68:18 also have “gave”). The “gifts” given by Christ turn out to be the church leaders described in Eph. 4:11. The **captives** over whom Christ triumphed are most likely demons (cf. this theme of victory over demonic forces in 1:19–22).

Eph. 4:9 lower regions, the earth. In the incarnation, Christ descended from the highest heavens to the lowest regions (i.e., to the earth), where he suffered, died, and was buried, but where he also

defeated death and rose again. He then **ascended** (Acts 1:9) 40 days later to be seated in the highest heavens at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33).

Eph. 4:10 far above. Christ is the supreme head of the church who fills **all things** (see 1:23) with his glory, power, and sovereign prerogative to dispense gifts to his people (see 4:11–16).

Eph. 4:11 Christ gives specific spiritual gifts to people in the church whose primary mission is to minister the Word of God (v. 12). For **apostles**, see note on 1:1. Regarding **prophets**, different views on the nature of the gift of prophecy in the NT affect one's understanding of this verse (see notes on 2:20; 1 Cor. 12:10). Since the Greek construction here is different from Eph. 2:20 and 3:5, some see this verse as a broader reference to the gift of prophecy generally in the NT church, rather than a reference to the “foundational” prophets mentioned in 2:20 and 3:5. From the Greek word for the “gospel” (*euangelion*), **evangelists** denotes people like Philip and Timothy who proclaimed the gospel (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). **shepherds** (or “pastors” [esv footnote]). In the OT these are kings and judges (2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7). In the NT, elders “shepherd” by watching over and nurturing the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1–2). There is some uncertainty as to whether “shepherds and **teachers**” refers here to two different ministry roles or functions, or whether the reference is to a single “shepherd-teacher” ministry role (cf. esv footnote), since Paul uses a different Greek conjunction at the end of the list, joining the two nouns more closely together than the other nouns in the list. If “teachers” are a separate group, they can be understood as a special branch of shepherds (overseers, elders) responsible for instruction in God's Word (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17).

Eph. 4:11–16 The Gifts for Edification of the Church. The list in v. 11 is not complete since deacons are omitted. The focus here is gifted people who articulate the gospel.

Eph. 4:12 Those church leaders with various gifts (v. 11) are to **equip the saints** (all Christians) so that they can do **the work of ministry**. All Christians have spiritual gifts that should be used in ministering to one another (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; 1 Pet. 4:10).

Eph. 4:13 The diversity of gifts serves to bring about the **unity** of Christ's people. **Mature manhood** extends the body metaphor used earlier for the church and contrasts with “children” in the next verse (see Heb. 5:11–14). Some people think that the learning of doctrine is inherently divisive, but it is *people* who divide the church, whereas the **knowledge of the Son of God** (both knowing Christ personally and understanding all that he did and taught) is edifying and brings about “mature manhood” when set forth in love (Phil. 3:10). The work of the gifted ministers (Eph. 4:11) was to proclaim and teach the word centered on Christ rather than on speculative or eccentric teachings of their own (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2). **measure**. Christ Jesus is the standard of the maturity to which the church must aspire. Christ's **fullness** is the full expression of his divine and human perfection (see Eph. 1:23; 3:19; Col. 1:19; 2:9).

Eph. 4:14 children. Immaturity in the truths of Christian doctrine makes the church like gullible children tossed helplessly by the **waves** and **wind** of **cunning** and **deceitful schemes** of false teachers (1 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 4:1–3; Jude 4; Rev. 2:2).

Eph. 4:15 The truth must not be used as a club to bludgeon people into acceptance and obedience but must always be presented **in love**. The truth leads the Christian to maturity, which is defined here as growing up **into Christ**. As **head**, Christ leads, directs, and guides the body (see 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3).

Eph. 4:16 joint. Paul continues the body metaphor to describe the church's maturity. Every member (i.e., every believer, viewed as a limb, or unit, in Christ's body) plays a crucial role in this growth. **in love.** There is no Christian maturity or true Christian ministry without love (1 Corinthians 13), and every act of love in the name of Christ is valued and remembered by him, as **each part is working properly** (illustrated in Eph. 4:25–32; cf. Matt. 25:31–43; 26:6–13).