

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

History, Culture, & Context

In this section of Ephesians, we read about the unity within the Body of Christ and what behaviors make for unity.

Chapter 4 begins with Paul urging us to “...lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called...” In other words, our calling in life should be in harmony with our conduct.



In vv. 2-3, the unity of the Spirit is maintained through the “bond of peace” This comes through “humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love...”

In vv. 4-7, Paul lists seven elements of unity that is centered on the three Persons of the Trinity: (1) One Body (the universal church); (2) One Spirit; (3) One Hope (our shared future with God); (4) One Lord (Christ); (5) One Faith; (6) One Baptism; and (7) One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. Each of us, then, is “given grace according to the measure

In vv. 11-13, we read about some of the gifts that Christ has bestowed upon the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) in order to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, until all of us come to the unity of the faith...”

In vv. 14-16, we see that spiritual maturity (“we must no longer be like children...blown about by every wind of doctrine and deceitful scheming...”) prevents us from falling into the hands of false doctrine and deceit. We mature by “...speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...” According to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible Commentary, “Ancient thinkers sometimes contrasted novices (here described as “children”) with the mature (vv. 13, 15), those who are wise.” In regard to the illustration of “being tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind...” (v. 14), it was common to use illustrations of seafarers navigating through storms in antiquity.

Verse 16 concludes with us needing to grow more like Christ “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”

Questions to Consider

1. How does the Gospel bring diverse people together in unity, and what does this look like?
2. What are some of the gifts given to the church? Which do you possess and how do you use them for the good of the church?
3. What does it mean to “...lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called”?