

The Apostle Paul addresses the topic of unity in Ephesians 4. God commands that we walk in unity with other believers (4:1–3). He provides the basis for unity (4:4–6). Jesus also enables believers together to live in unity. God does not merely command us, He gives what we need to obey His commands.

Jesus Christ graciously gives to believers what they need to live harmoniously. He gives (as a gift) to each and every believer special grace to be able to uniquely contribute to the body of believers. He also has given some people to the church to help all the others to grow together properly.

1. ***Jesus Christ gifts each believer to enable all believers to walk in unity (4:7–10).***

The diversity of gifts and God's grace to individuals does not work against unity but actually fosters unity in the Body of Christ. Some may get more, others less. It reveals itself differently. But it all works together.

a. *There are at least three reasons why this gift of grace fosters unity.*

- 1) Jesus includes every true believer. No unbeliever is included. This began at Pentecost when Jesus gave His Spirit to all who trusted in Him and received forgiveness of sins (Acts 2).
- 2) Jesus gives both grace and the gifts that fit each individual believer. The Body needs what He gives. Every gift needs the others. Therefore, there is no place for pride or disappointment or envy.
- 3) It is all grace. God gives it. Jesus proportions it out. Therefore, it is all about God and not about us.

Unity is not uniformity. Diversity a more beautiful unity. God's diverse giving of grace provides a more beautiful unity among believers.

b. *Paul gives proof from the Old Testament that the Messiah would give gifts (4:8–10).* Jesus, the Messiah, gave gifts when He returned to heaven.

- 1) Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8. The main points are victorious and the Victor giving gifts.
- 2) Paul understood the Psalm to point to Jesus as the Messiah.

The Messiah must be God (as Jesus also had shown from Psalm 110:1). If the divine Messiah ascended, then he must also have first descended. God is in heaven, so He cannot ascend unless He first descends. Paul understood that this referred to the Son of God who came to earth and became a man. When Jesus returned to heaven, He was exalted to the right hand of God the Father.

Jesus is the Giver of Gifts to all believers and He gives His grace so that we are able to live in unity. When each member of the Body functions properly, the body grows and acts in unity (see 4:11–17).

2. ***Jesus Christ has given some as gifts to the whole Body to enable all believers to grow together in their giftedness and live in unity (4:11-13).***

a. *Christ gave five special gifts to the whole Body to work toward unity (v 11).*

- 1) Christ gave some as apostles (authorized witnesses and representatives of Jesus), some as prophets (recipients of revelation from God who with the apostles were foundational for the church), some as evangelists (proclaimers of the gospel), and some as pastors and teachers (who proclaim, explain, and apply the Word). Jesus uses these five gifts to the church as tools to equip or train the church.
- 2) There are two important characteristics of these gifts: (1) these are people and not abilities; (2) they all have the Word of God in common.

b. *Christ gave these gifts to equip every believer for service which builds a unified body (v 12).*

- 1) The five gifts equip the believers. Then the believers are to do the work of the ministry. This in turn builds up the body of Christ.
- 2) Pastors, teachers, and evangelists use the Word of God, which is the best way to equip believers for unity. Preach and teach systematically the Bible, the whole council of God.
- 3) Believers serve one another, each with their own gifts, as they learn from the Word of God.
- 4) The immediate goal of serving is the spiritual growth of the body of Christ. There can be unity in the church only as each believer becomes equipped and serves according to God's Word, the Bible.

c. *Christ gave these gifts to bring the body to maturity which is marked by unity (v 13).*

- 1) A deepening relationship with Jesus and growing knowledge of Jesus fosters unity.
- 2) Increasing unity is part of maturity, that is, being a mature adult spiritually.
- 3) Unity and maturity together moves believers to "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Becoming more like Christ is God's goal for believers (Romans 8:29), which will happen perfectly when believers see Him (1 John 3:2). Becoming more like Jesus also means that we experience more unity.

Every church has the potential of being unified. Believers have everything they need to walk in unity and grow in unity. (1) It is necessary that each person truly has trusted Christ as Savior and Lord. (2) It is also important that each person is growing in Christ and becoming more like Him. (3) The whole Word of God must be central.

(4) Each must serve the others.

Use Scripture to help pray for one another, encourage one another, and with love one another. As you grow together in Christ by His Word, you will experience increasing unity.