

A STUDY ON EPHESIANS

Week 3

Ephesians 4:1-5:20

**Being the true Church
through the members of the Church**

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Ephesians 4:1-10

Christians, the Church...IS...ONE, as our GOD...IS...ONE

Ephesians 4:1-6

- v. 1 - Paul identifies himself as a prisoner IN (not “for”) the Lord. This is not a negative. Paul is proud to be physically, but also metaphorically in this state. Based upon his example he is strongly urging the Church to live in such a way that it will reflect the fact that we’ve been called by God—which is a pretty big deal! If we can live so close to God that it would seem that we’re “prisoners IN the Lord”, then we’ll obviously get it right even when we’re literally thrown into a prison! In other words, any other tuff situation will not break our faith, and our commitment to a life worthy of our calling.
 - v. 2 - Pride is a terrible thing, and can creep in so subtlety and quickly. We should continue to stay humble, and treat others in a way that they will enjoy being with us. When someone upsets you or irritates you, the important thing is to exercise self control, and continue to treat them well. Love should secure our loyalty to one another, even when boundaries are being pushed.
 - vv. 3-6 - The Holy Spirit fused us together to be ONE team. ONE team, that needs to stay TOGETHER, with NOTHING tearing our relationships apart. GOD is ONE, so we need to be ONE Body, under ONE Head through the power of ONE Spirit. All of us share ONE Hope: To serve ONE Lord, through ONE Faith, with ONE Baptism showcasing our faith in our ONE GOD, Who is the Father of us all. He is the most important One over all. He works through all of us, and lives in all of us.
- ❖ How does Paul’s example of staying faithful to God’s calling over his life encourages and challenges you?
 - ❖ In which ways can we protect and grow our unity as one Body under one God?

Ephesians 4:7-10

- v. 7 - By grace, without us deserving anything, God gave to each one of us special gifts. In His wisdom Christ gave to each of us in a way that requires from us to stay dependent upon each other. To each has been given to the benefit of all.
 - v. 8 - When Jesus returned to heaven, He entered as a King Who won the war. Everyone could see in His enemies that He had conquered, and that He gave gifts to His people.
 - vv. 9-10 - That Jesus “returned” (ascended) to heaven, means that He once was in heaven and then came down to earth. Now that He returned with a public victory over all His enemies there is not doubt that He rules over all. In fact every “corner”, every part of the entire universe, is filled with the presence of our Lord!
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- ❖ What are your gifts, talents and abilities that you have received from Jesus? Are you intentionally making these available to the Church so that all can benefit from it?
 - ❖ What are the implications for you as a child of God, that Jesus had victory of all possible enemies, and that you are now always in His victorious presence?
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Ephesians 4:11-16, Jesus cares for His Church

Ephesians 4:11-13

- vv. 11-13 - Jesus gave us special things to accomplish in His Church. Not all of us have the same duties. Some are to preach His Message in other places, while some needs to bring special Messages from God to certain congregations. Some has the duty to explain the Message of God with care, while others can help people when they have a certain need. All of this enables and prepares the Christians to do their work in this world well. In this way the Body of Christ becomes strong and can be all that it is supposed to be. We shift closer and closer to each other, thus growing in our unity with one another, getting to know the Son of God better, and placing our faith more and more in Him. This is how we become spiritual adults, always aiming to be as mature in our spiritual walk as Christ Himself.

- ❖ Who are the people in your life fulfilling their spiritual duties so well that they build unity in the Church and enable and encourage you to grow into spiritual maturity? Take a moment to thank God for them, and pray for them. Now pray for how you can continue to serve the Body of Christ well.

Ephesians 4:14-16

- v. 14 - As mature Christians we will no longer be like little children who are uncertain about what is expected of them. We won't be like a ship that's being blown where the wind takes it. We will also not simply follow whatever we hear from whomever. As mature Christians we will be able to discern well when people try to deceive us to take a wrong path.
 - v. 15 - In love we'll remain loyal to each other and stay only on the path of truth. Through every experience our relationship with Jesus will simply become stronger, and as the Body of Christ we will grow in our dependency upon Him as our Head.
 - v. 16 - The Body of Christ is perfectly put together. Every body part has its specific place, in order for each part to do its job perfectly in supporting the other parts. This is how the Body of Christ grows in strength—the different parts support each other in love and loyalty.
- ❖ How would you like to describe yourself as a mature Christian?
 - ❖ You are a very special part of the Body of Christ. How do you see your function in the Lord's Body? Be as specific as you can.

Ephesians 4:17-5:5, Leave your old life behind—LIVE NEW!

Ephesians 4:17-21

- vv. 17-19 - Paul gets very serious, reminding the Church not to take what he says lightly. The Lord Himself wants believers to stop acting as if they don't know the Lord. Nonbelievers can literally not come up with anything that is worth following. Their thoughts are busy with unimportant things, and they can't reach beyond their own limitations as they are separated from the "life of God". They don't even realize that God has something completely new for them in store, due to their stubborn hearts. They have actually lost all sense of what is right and what is wrong, thus living terrible lives, making horrible decisions, and the sad thing is: They simply cannot get enough of it!
 - vv. 20-21 - Paul now continues to remind the Church that this was what their old lives looked like. This is not how they got to know Christ. There was a clear shift: When they met Christ, they became followers of Him! They learned the real Truth, because it is only by knowing Jesus that you can know the actual Truth.
- ❖ What stirs in your heart when you look at how a life outside of Christ is being described?

Ephesians 4:22-24

- v. 22 - This is not optional: As Christ followers we need to leave the old way of life behind. It is like getting out of dirty clothes—you take it all off so that you can wash up and get dressed with clean clothes. In the same way we need to remove our old nature, because it is full of sinful desires, longing only to do what is bad, and leading to only one place—destruction.
- vv. 23-24 - We need a completely new attitude. We need to think in a new way about life. This new lifestyle should become as much part of our lives, as we have put on new clothes. Our new life should make us look more and more like our God. We should live like our God wants us to, and dedicate ourselves completely to Him.

- ❖ Our “old” (outside of Christ) and “new” lives (in Christ) should look drastically different from each other. Can you list some of the differences in your *old life*, in comparison to your *new life* as you are now following Christ with all your heart?

Ephesians 4:25-32

- v. 25 - Paul now starts to share what a new life in Christ is supposed to look like. We should not lie to each other. We should be honest, remembering that we all play for the same team!
 - vv. 26-27 - When we get upset with one another, we should not do things that will shame our God. In fact, we should not go to bed while still being upset with someone, not even for a single night! Never give the devil an opportunity to get a hold on you.
 - v. 28 - Nobody should make a living by taking other people’s stuff. We should get a job, do something useful and earn our food in an honest way. This way we’ll be able to feed ourselves and even have something left over for people who don’t have enough.
 - v. 29 - Stop with dirty jokes and inappropriate chatter. When we speak it should add value. Think carefully about what could be helpful in certain circumstances, and then speak into that.
 - v. 30 - Do not hurt the heart of the Holy Spirit given to you by God. The Spirit in you is proof that you belong to God, and this will continue to be true till the day that we are completely rid of sin, forever.
 - v. 31 - Don’t become bitter. Control your temper, and when you do lose it, do not stay upset. Do not cuss or say terrible things to others. Don’t do things that are bad for others.
 - v. 32 - Treat each other with care. It should be a great experience for others to be around you. Have grace with their mistakes as God has grace with yours, because you belong to Jesus.
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- ❖ Are there any of these things that Paul pointed out as part of your new life in Christ that you struggle with? Why is that so? Take it to the Lord in prayer, ask forgiveness, and then make in the Spirit a plan to embrace the new life in Christ, day by day, more and more, till you are not hurting the heart of the Spirit anymore.

Ephesians 5:1-5

- v. 1 - We need to aim to do as children of a loving Father would do—wanting to be and act like Him! Every little thing that we do should radiate *love*. This is exactly the example that Christ has left us with.
 - v. 2 - Christ loved us so much that He gave his life to our advantage. He sacrificed Himself, and God accepted this sacrifice as payment for all the debt that accumulated because of our sin.
 - v. 3 - We belong to God. For this reason we should not even think about sexual indecencies of any nature, or become greedy.
 - v. 4 - We really have to be careful what comes out of our mouths. We shouldn't talk dirty, our words should be chosen with care. It really is extremely important. Our words have a lot of influence and should reflect that we are Christians! This is the simple test: Can God find pleasure in listening to us?
 - v. 5 - Rest assured: An immoral and greedy life will not lead to a place in God's new world!
- ❖ What should change in your life to reflect that you are a child of a loving, heavenly Father?
 - ❖ What happens in your head and what comes out of your mouth? Can God find pleasure in debating your thoughts with you, and listening to your words?
 - ❖ How about your money: Can you and God look at your finances with joy? If not, what needs to change with how you handle all the money stuff?

Ephesians 5:6-20, Don't hide stuff—live openly before your God

Ephesians 5:6-14

- vv. 6-7 - Paul warns us to not get deceived by people who bend the things of the old life to sound good, while it is actually dull and empty. Such things bring people in trouble with God and God will surely punish them if they don't listen to Him. Therefore, stay away from these people.
 - vv. 8-9 - At some point there were no difference between us as believers and those living in spiritual darkness, but now we are serving the Lord and and should live as people who can see clearly where to go.
 - v. 10 - Followers of Christ should therefore live as people who have nothing to hide. Everything they say and do should be as people of the Light, who are *in* the light as if it was a bright sunny day! People living like this do what God expects and stand by the Truth. It is good to ask before you do something: Will the Lord be pleased with this?
 - vv. 11-13 - Stay away from people who are busy with shady things in the dark. Nothing with lasting value can come from this. We should rather warn others about these things. Things done by people in spiritual darkness and disobedience to God is so shameful that one cannot even talk about it. When the Light of Christ falls on it one can easily see how bad it really is.
 - v. 14 - Remember, in the light we cannot hide anything, and once something is brought into the light then all can see it, which is why Scripture says: Wake up you who are asleep; come to life from death, and Christ will let His Light shine upon you.
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- ❖ Do you know people who bend things that should be wrong to sound acceptable through a lot of talking? What should you do about this?
 - ❖ Are there people, things and places who are busy with things in spiritual darkness that you are sometimes tempted to visit and/or try out? What should you do about this?
 - ❖ Are there something in your life that should really be brought into the Light? Is it not better to live as if we're actually always out in the open, visible and accessible to all?

Ephesians 5:15-20

- v. 15 - Paul warns us to be really careful how we choose to live. We have to be committed to live as people who know what God expects from a worthy life, and not like people who have no clue!
 - vv. 16-17 - Another encouragement: Don't waste your time! We should use every opportunity to its fullest extend! We need to recognize that we're in difficult and bad times—our Christlike input into every situation are much needed! Souls are at stake! It doesn't matter how many years, days, hours and minutes we have on earth—Jesus' public ministry was a short 3 years and He changed the course of history forever. The question is rather what we are doing with the time we have. We shouldn't waste our lives by living purposeless. Rather make sure how God wants us to live, and then do that with this clear goal in mind.
 - v. 18 - One more warning: Don't drink too much alcohol or we will lose control over ourselves. We should rather leave control of our lives to the Holy Spirit!
 - vv. 19-20 - Let us rather spend our lives worshipping our Lord passionately with songs of praise and thanksgiving in our hearts for all that our Father is doing for us! Our Lord made all of this possible! Why would we not live differently as children of our heavenly Father?
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- ❖ Time wasters are probably something we all struggle with. Are there some things that you need to stop or reconsider, to manage available time that could go to the Lord, better? What all would that be? Be specific in identifying it, but also coming up with a plan on how to deal with it.
 - ❖ Alcohol destroys so many lives, not only of the person drinking, but also surrounding relationships. Is this something you struggle with, or perhaps you have someone close to you in this battle? The encouragement would be to bring also this into the Light and commit to get the necessary help. Let all our energy, our time, our lives become one big praise to our Father through our Lord and His Spirit!
