

Bible Study  
Ephesians 4:1-16

Introduction: Instruction manual example. When you buy something that comes with instructions, do you read the instructions? Why or why not?

This section opens the second half of Paul's letter as Paul takes his readers back to the fundamental instructions on living the Christian life. One author put it this way, "Thus Paul signals his shift in focus from doctrine (ch. 1-3) to duty (ch. 4-6); from exposition of the mystery of God to exhortation to live in a way that is consistent with what they know to be true" (*Serendipity* 48).

The ambiguity of unity and the limits of being part of something bigger than yourself. Read Genesis 11:1-9. At your table summarize *what* you think went wrong and *how* it went wrong.

We have a large degree of unity with respect to the scientific method (for example medical research and development of technology). Where's the ambiguity and limits of this unity?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

1. Paul begins chapter 4 by saying "therefore." This "therefore" is a coordinating conjunction. It tells us that what Paul is about to write is the *logical result or inference* of what he has just said.

Let's go back and read Ephesians 3:14-18 *and then* read Ephesians 4:1-4 again. Why do you think 4:1-4 is the logical result of 3:14-18?

2. What are the characteristics Paul outlines in verse 2? How would these allow a person to fulfill verse 3?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_: (\_\_\_\_\_). Willing to take little honor or willing to give higher place to another. In pagan eyes, humility suggested a lack of self-respect. Read Mark 10:42-44; John 13:13-17; 1 Peter 5:5-6.
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_: (\_\_\_\_\_). Gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one's dealings with others. Or a quality of friendly gentleness and a meekness understood as strength that accommodates to another's weakness (consideration). Gentleness was not a virtue to the Greeks, who believed in using might for right, but Judaism honored Moses as meek. Numbers 12:3; Matthew 5:5.
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_: (\_\_\_\_\_). Self-restraint in the face of provocation. Romans 12:19-21.
3. At your table briefly discuss where we see the Holy Trinity in verses 4-6.
4. What does the inclusion of "one baptism" alongside "one Lord, one faith...one God and Father of all" tell us about the importance of baptism?
5. Compare verse 8 to Psalm 68:18.

Jews sang Psalm 68 in their synagogues on Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks), the day on which they thanked God for His providence for all the good things they enjoyed under the terms of the covenant. The psalm exalts God as a conqueror returning to his capital in triumph.

The last line of Psalm 68:18 reads in Hebrew, “you received gifts from men.” Most commentators think Paul either himself inverted the words to stress that Christ is much more the giver than the receiver of gifts, or Paul was quoting a Christian hymn which had changed the psalm to make the same point.

6. Read verses 9-10. Some believe Paul meant that Christ descended to the lowest state in the universe, not just living on earth as a human but even going down to death and the place of death as a human (remember the Apostles’ Creed, and He descended into hell). Read Philippians 2:8-11.
7. Read verses 12-13.
  - a. **Apostles:** Paul probably had in mind the small group of individuals who had seen the resurrected Christ and had been commissioned by Him to launch His church. See 1 Cor. 9:1.
  - b. **Prophet:** in contrast to teachers who relied upon the OT scripture and the teaching of Jesus to instruct others, prophets offered words of instruction, exhortation, and admonition, which were immediate and unpremeditated.
  - c. **Evangelists:** those with special gifts of making the gospel clear and convincing to others.
  - d. **Pastors and teachers:** the way in which this is expressed in Greek indicates these two functions reside in one person. This is the Office of the Holy Ministry, literally “shepherds” called to be local overseers of the church, also called bishops.
  - e. In verse 13, what is the purpose of this diversity of gifts? “all attain the unity of \_\_\_\_\_ and of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Son of God, to \_\_\_\_\_, to the measure of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the fulness of Christ.” According to these verses, does everyone have a share in this ministry Christ has given to His church? Why or why not? Read 1 Peter 2:9 and Ephesians 3:11-12. If there is a \_\_\_\_\_ of all believers, then there is also a \_\_\_\_\_ of all believers.
8. The aim of these gifts is to produce maturity. Maturity is, in turn, vital to unity—the theme with which Paul began this section. What are the chief signs of maturity in verses 13-15? What are the chief signs of immaturity in verse 14?
9. Can you give an example of speaking the truth that is not done in love?
10. What does all of this suggest to you about your own spiritual growth? How about the collective growth of the congregation?