

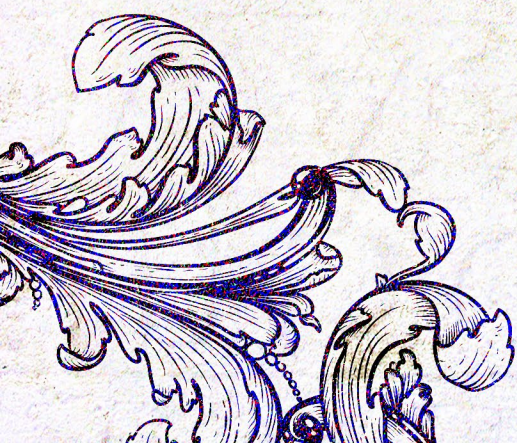


A COLORFUL MYSTERY

# CHURCH

.....  
A STUDY IN EPHESIANS  
.....

*a field guide*



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# BODY WORK

DRAWING  
NEAR



1] The Apostle Paul calls the church the “Body of Christ.” Why do you think that is a good metaphor?

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2] In what ways does our church serve and work together as one body? In what ways do we struggle with unity?

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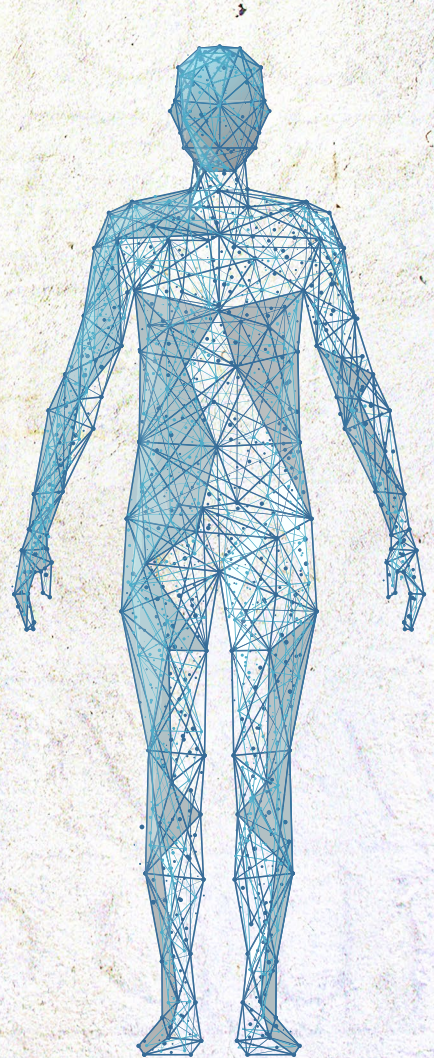
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## Q THE CONTEXT

After three chapters of solid instruction in the foundational truths of God, Paul takes a dramatic turn, shifting his emphasis from doctrine to duty. From principles to practice, from beliefs to behavior, he has set forth all the blessings, honors, and privileges of being a child of God. Now he reminds believers of their consequent obligations and requirements as members of God's family.

First, Paul explains to his beloved congregation in Ephesus that they must live up to their new identity and calling in Christ. Next, he describes the characteristics of true believers and how believers who are committed to the glory of God will live together in unity. This unity cannot occur unless each individual does his or her part. God has given each member of His church one or more gifts for the building up of the body. Corporately and individually we are to grow up and mature in faith, always on our guard against erroneous ideas spread by deceitful teachers.<sup>1</sup>

To see how you can do your part to make our church all that God wants it to be, read and study the following passage.

## KEYS TO THE TEXT

**The Body of Christ:** The human body is by far the most amazing organic creation of God. While marvelously diverse and complex, it is yet unified, exhibiting unparalleled harmony and interrelatedness. Christ's body—the church—shares those same characteristics. Just as a human body has connected tissues, muscles, bones, ligaments, and organs, the body of

Christ is comprised of members who are responsible to one another. No member exists detached from the rest of the body, no more than lungs can lie on the floor in the next room and keep a person breathing. The health of the body, its witness, and its testimony depend on all members faithfully ministering to one another.<sup>2</sup>

**Spiritual Gifts:** The Greek word for spiritual literally means "pertaining to the Spirit," referring to that which has spiritual qualities or characteristics or is under some form of spiritual control. Spiritual gifts are driving enablement's for ministry that the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers. They are to be completely under His control and used for the building of the church to Christ's glory. The word gifts comes from the Greek word charisma and means essentially "gift of grace" or "free gift" and in sixteen of its seventeen New Testament uses is connected to God as the Giver.

<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John. Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.





# UNLEASHING THE TEXT

## Key Terms

Read 4:1-16, noting the key words and definitions next to the passage.

## Ephesians 4:1-16<sup>1</sup>

### Unity In The Body of Christ

**1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." **9** (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? **10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) **11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. **15** Rather, speaking

**THEREFORE (v.1)** – This is the transitional word that indicates Paul's shift from discussing doctrine to discussing duty.

**PRISONER FOR THE LORD (v.1)** – Although Paul is still in prison he reminds us that his real captor is Christ.

**URGE (v.1)** – To call to one's side, with the intention of needing help; this word implies strong feeling or desire and suggests pleading or begging.

**HUMILITY (v.2)** – Modesty, lowliness, a sense of moral insignificance in attitude and unselfish concern for others. It is the total absence of arrogance, conceit, and haughtiness.

**GENTLENESS (v.2)** – A disposition that is even-tempered, tranquil, balanced in spirit, unpretentious, and that has the passions under control. The word is best translated "meekness," not as an indication of weakness, but of power and strength under control.

**PATIENCE (v.2)** – The word denotes lenience, forbearance, fortitude, patient endurance, long-suffering. Also included is the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes the person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint.

**BEARING ONE ANOTHER (v.2)** – The word carries the idea of persevering, tolerating, making allowance, putting up with, standing firm, and not losing courage under pressure.

<sup>1</sup>ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible: Christ in All of Scripture, Grace for All of Life: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.



the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

**3] What did Paul challenge the Ephesians to do in 4:1? Explain how this is done.**

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**4] Discuss the character qualities Paul mentions that will mark the life of a believer. Which of these qualities present the greatest struggle for you?**

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**5] What obstacles can impede the spiritual growth and maturing of an individual Christian? Or an entire congregation?**

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**EAGER (v.3)** – To exert oneself, make every effort, give diligence, make haste, be zealous, strain every nerve, and further the cause assiduously. The word combines thinking and acting, planning and producing. It sees a need and promptly does something about it.

**UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (v.3)** – The Spirit-bestowed oneness of all true believers.

**PEACE (v.3)** – A state of rest, quietness, and calmness; an absence of strife; tranquility. Includes harmonious relationships between God and men, humans, nations, and families. Jesus as Prince of Peace gives peace to those who call upon Him for personal salvation.

**HOPE (v.4)** – This doesn't mean "I hope so," like hoping you get a raise at work. It carries an assurance for the future. When we were lost, we were "without hope" but in Jesus Christ, we have a "living hope" that encourages us day by day. This is not the sense of an opportunistic outlook or wishful thinking without any foundation, but in the sense of confident expectation based on God's promises, particularly those pertaining to Christ's return.

**BAPTISM (v.5)** – The word emphasizes the result of the act rather than the act itself. In Christian baptism the stress is on the baptized person's identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. T

**GRACE (v.7)** – an unearned gift

**APOSTLES (v.11)** – sent one; special messenger, a delegate, one commissioned for a particular task or role, one who is sent forth with a message. In the New Testament the word denotes both the original disciples and prominent leaders outside the Twelve

**PROPHET (v.11)** – a unique mouthpiece for God that encourages, edifies and comforts through either a foretold (preached) or forth-told (prophesied) message.





# GOING DEEPER

*For more on what it means to be the body of Christ, read **Romans 12:4-18**.*

**EVANGELIST (v.11)** - A gifted communicator of the gospel, particularly to unbelievers. This gift is often accompanied with other spiritual gifts

**PASTORS (v.11)** - The word means a herdsman, shepherd; one who tends, leads, guides, cherishes, feeds, and protects a flock. The New Testament uses the word for a Christian pastor to whose care and leadership others will commit themselves.

**TEACHER (v.11)**- They feed God's people through the taught word, establishing them in sound doctrine

**EQUIP (v.12)** - A making fit, preparing, training, perfecting, making fully qualified for service. In classical language the word used for setting a bone during surgery.

**MATURE (v.13)**- Refers to that which has reached an end, that is, finished, complete, perfect. When applied to persons, it signifies consummate soundness, and includes the idea of being whole.

**CUNNING (v.14)**- cleverness, sophisticated lies, unscrupulous conduct, evil treachery, arrogant shrewdness, and sly arrogance. The Greek word is only used 5 times in the New Testament, it refers to Satan's deceiving (2 Cor 11:3); the Pharisees' attempt to trick Jesus (Luke 20:23); deception of false teachers (Eph 4:14); self-entrapment of the worldly wise (1 Cor 3:19); and the improper method of presenting the gospel (2 Cor 4:2).

**DECEITFUL SCHEMES (v.14)** - Metaphorically, the word denotes a going astray, an error. In the New Testament the straying is always in respect to morals and doctrine.

**WORKING (v.16)** - Work in action, operative power. The English word "energy" comes from this word. This word usually describes the work of God.

## **Romans 12:4-18**<sup>1</sup>

**4** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, **5** so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **6** Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; **7** if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; **8** the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

### **Marks of the True Christian**

**9** Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. **11** Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. **12** Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **13** Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. **17** Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

<sup>1</sup>ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible: Christ in All of Scripture, Grace for All of Life: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.



# EXPLORING THE MEANING

**6] What main ideas do you see in the Romans passage that echo Paul's challenge to the church at Ephesus?**

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**7] How do the existence of different spiritual gifts help bring about unity and growth in the body of Christ? How do differing sometimes spark conflict?**

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**8] What will mature Christian love look like in the body of Christ? Conversely, would would be signs of a church's lack of maturity**

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## TRUTH FOR TODAY

The church was never intended to be only a building – a place where people walk in, listen, and walk out still alone—but a place of fellowship. In true fellowship Christians don't judge one another; they don't bite and devour each other; they don't provoke, envy, lie to one another, speak evil or grumble about one another. Since true fellowship builds up, the godly will crevice one another and be kind and tenderhearted toward one another. They will forebear and forgive one another, serve one another, practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another, admonish, instruct, submit to one another, and comfort one another. That is the true fellowship of Christ's body—life touching life to bring blessing and spiritual growth. The great need of the church has always been spiritual maturity rather than organizational restructuring.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John. Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.



# REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

9] Think about the relationships you have in our community of faith. What, if anything, keeps you from unity and fellowship? What would it look like for you to “walk worthy of your calling” in these relationships?

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10] Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If so, please share what they are, how you’ve operated in them, and any questions you may have about spiritual gifts.

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# SPIRITUAL gifts

Ephesians 4:11 mentions five personal ministries of gifted leaders in the church, but several other passages in Scripture list the kinds of spiritual gifts that have been distributed among all believers

## ROMANS 12:6-8

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:4-11

## EPHESIANS 4:11

## 1 PETER 4:10-11

Prophecy

Service

Teaching

Exhortation

Giving

Leading

Mercy

Word of wisdom

Word of knowledge

Faith

Healing

Miracles

Prophecy

Discerning of spirits

Speaking in tongues

Interpreting tongues

Apostle

Prophet

Evangelist

Pastor

Teach

Speaking

Serving