



“Renewed Community”

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

Study Guide for the week of
March 19, 2023

Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. What keeps sports teams unified?
2. What did Paul urge the Ephesians to do? ([4:1](#))
3. What three virtues foster unity among Christians? ([4:2](#))
4. How should Christians conduct themselves toward each other? Why? ([4:2-6](#))
5. What are the seven elements of Christian unity? ([4:4-6](#))
6. How are we enabled to live at peace with each other? ([4:7](#))
7. Who gives grace to each believer? ([4:7](#))
8. How do you get along with other Christians?
9. What is God’s prescription for unity among believers?
10. How do you need to show humility, gentleness, and patience in dealing with a difficult relationship this week?

Life Application Bible Notes

[4:1, 2](#) God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. In light of this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own. This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? How well are you doing as his representative?

[4:1-6](#) "There is one body," says Paul. Unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Often differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church. Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* future, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God! Have you learned to appreciate people who are different from you? Can you see how their differing gifts and viewpoints can help the church as it does God's work? Learn to enjoy the way we members of Christ's body complement one another. (See [1 Corinthians 12:12, 13](#) for more on this thought.)

[4:2](#) No one is ever going to be perfect here on earth, so we must accept and love other Christians in spite of their faults. When we see faults in fellow believers, we should be patient and gentle. Is there someone whose actions or personality really annoys you? Rather than dwelling on that person's weaknesses or looking for faults, pray for him or her. Then do even more—spend time together and see if you can learn to like him or her.

Believers are one in**Our unity is experienced in**

Body	The fellowship of believers—the church
Spirit	The Holy Spirit who activates the fellowship
Hope	That glorious future to which we are all called
Lord	Christ, to whom we all belong
Faith	Our singular commitment to Christ
Baptism	Baptism—the sign of entry into the church
God	God, who is our Father who keeps us for eternity

Too often believers are separated because of minor differences in doctrine. But Paul here shows those areas where Christians must agree to attain true unity. When believers have this unity of spirit, petty differences should never be allowed to dissolve that unity.

4:3 To build unity is one of the Holy Spirit's important roles. He leads, but we have to be willing to be led and to do our part to keep the peace. We do that by focusing on God, not on ourselves. For more about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does, see the notes on [John 3:6](#); [Acts 1:5](#); and [Ephesians 1:13, 14](#).

4:4-7 All believers in Christ belong to one body; all are united under one head, Christ himself (see [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)). Each believer has God-given abilities that can strengthen the whole body. Your special ability may seem small or large, but it is yours to use in God's service. Ask God to use your unique gifts to contribute to the strength and health of the body of believers.

4:6 God is "over all"—this shows his overruling care (transcendence). He is "in all" and "living through all"—this shows his active presence in the world and in the lives of believers (immanence). Any view of God that violates either his transcendence or his immanence does not paint a true picture of God.

4:8 In [Psalm 68:18](#), God is pictured as a conqueror marching to the gates and taking tribute from the fallen city. Paul uses that picture to teach that Christ, in his crucifixion and resurrection, was victorious over Satan. When Christ ascended to heaven, he gave gifts to the church, some of which Paul discusses in [4:11-13](#).

4:9 The "lowly world" may be (1) the earth itself (lowly by comparison to heaven), (2) the grave, or (3) Hades. However we understand it, Christ is Lord of the whole universe, past, present, and future. Nothing or no one is hidden from him. The Lord of all came to earth and faced death to rescue all people. No one is beyond his reach.

[4:11, 12](#) Our oneness in Christ does not destroy our individuality. The Holy Spirit has given each Christian special gifts for building up the church. Now that we have these gifts, it is crucial to use them. Are you spiritually mature, exercising the gifts God has given you? If you know what your gifts are, look for opportunities to serve. If you don't know, ask God to show you, perhaps with the help of your minister or Christian friends. Then, as you begin to recognize your special area of service, use your gifts to strengthen and encourage the church.

[4:12, 13](#) God has given his church an enormous responsibility—to make disciples in every nation ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many other tasks. If we had to fulfill this command as individuals, we might as well give up without trying—it would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone. It is a human tendency to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and to underestimate what we can do as a group. But as the body of Christ, we can accomplish more together than we would dream possible working by ourselves. Working together, the church can express the fullness of Christ (see the note on [3:19](#)).

[4:14-16](#) Christ is the truth ([John 14:6](#)), and the Holy Spirit, who guides the church, is the Spirit of truth ([John 16:13](#)). Satan, by contrast, is the father of lies ([John 8:44](#)). As followers of Christ, we must be committed to the truth. This means both that our words should be honest and that our actions should reflect Christ's integrity. Speaking the truth in love is not always easy, convenient, or pleasant, but it is necessary if the church is going to do Christ's work in the world.

[4:15](#) In describing the mature Christian, Paul says that one of the marks is the ability to "speak the truth in love." This sounds so simple, but it seems so hard for us to do. Some of us are fairly good at speaking the truth, but we forget to be loving. Some of us are good at being loving, but we don't have it in us to level with others if the truth is painful. The instruction here is to do both: Speak the truth, but do it in a loving manner. Think of the trouble we would spare ourselves if we followed this practice, especially in the church! When you have a problem with another believer, don't go to someone else with it. Go directly to that person, and speak the truth in love.

[4:15, 16](#) Some Christians fear that any mistake will destroy their witness for the Lord. They see their own weaknesses, and they know that many non-Christians seem to have stronger character than they do. How can we grow more and more like Christ? The answer is that Christ forms us into a body—into a group of individuals who are united in their purpose and in their love for one another and for the Lord. If an individual stumbles, the rest of the group is there to pick that person up and help him or her walk with God again. If a person sins, he or she can find restoration through the church ([Galatians 6:1](#)) even as the rest of the body continues to witness to God's truth. As part of Christ's body, do you reflect part of Christ's character and carry out your special role in his work?

Study Guide questions and notes are from

