

EPIC: God's People on Mission
"Equip"
Ephesians 4:1-16

I. Dismiss Children

II. Hook –

III. Series Overview

- a. Week 1 – Embark – God has embarked on a mission to redeem and restore mankind, and we are invited to embark on that same mission.
- b. Week 2 – Energy – Jesus Christ is the source of the power or energy that we the people of God, the Church possess to accomplish the mission.
- c. Week 3 – Enlist – God has enlisted us to serve as a part of His team that is accomplishing His mission
- d. Week 4 – Established – We are now established as a unified people of God through faith in Jesus.
- e. Week 5 – Envoy – We are stewards and messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- f. Week 6 – Expect – As God's messengers we can expect that God will do something through us as we faithfully serve Him.
- g. Today – Equip – We have been equipped with everything we need for unity and maturity within the Body of Christ.

IV. Prayer

V. Text

Ephesians 4:1-16 - As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

VI. Message

a. Striving for Unity (4:1-6).

i. Practical Unity (1-3).

1. **Ephesians 4:1-3** - As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
2. Paul is saying that based on everything he already said which is true about us, then there is a way in which we each should be living. There is a standard, a lifestyle that is appropriate for those who are part of the family of God.
 - a. Humble
 - b. Gentle
 - c. Patient
 - d. Forbearing (Putting up with in a loving way)
 - e. Keep unity and peace
3. Why is unity so important here? Paul is talking about our testimony as individuals and also our collective testimony as the church. For us to be in disunity means that we are unwilling to live in the way Jesus lived.
4. There is also power in unity. The weight of a single snowflake averages somewhere between .001 to .003 grams. This means it would take somewhere between 100,000 to 250,000 snowflakes to equal one pound. While the weight of one snowflake may not be much the

accumulative weight of many snowflakes can do a lot of damage.

5. VIDEO

ii. Theological Unity (4-6).

1. **Ephesians 4:4-6** - There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
2. Paul mentions seven different elements that create theological unity for us as God's people. This is a great starting point to see how much in common our faith might have with that of another group or church.
 - a. Body – The Church the body of Christ
 - b. Spirit – Holy Spirit part of the Trinity
 - c. Hope – Return of Jesus Resurrection of the Saints
 - d. Lord – Jesus Christ as son of God fully God and fully man.
 - e. Faith – Salvation by faith in Jesus
 - f. Baptism – Representation of that faith
 - g. God and Father – God the father as part of the Trinity

3. When you encounter any teaching or group that claims to be Christian but does not agree with these seven core truths then that is a key indicator that you are actually dealing with some sort of cult.
4. This list is not exhaustive or as detailed as it could be but it is basic list of core doctrines of the Christian faith. If we have unity in these areas we can have fellowship with those whom we disagree about it other areas. Some of my best friends are pastors with whom I don't agree on every theological issue but I absolutely agree with them on these core doctrines.

b. Striving for Maturity (4:7-16).

i. The Source of Our Gifts: Christ (7-10).

1. **Ephesians 4:7-10** - But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)
2. The Bible uses the term grace in two different senses.
 - a. Saving Grace (Eph 2:8-9) – Free gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus

b. Sanctifying Grace – This is the grace that matures us, makes us more like Jesus, helps us to live in a way that is please to God.

3. Here Paul is referring to sanctifying grace, more specifically the gifts for service that we have which is based on this grace.
4. **Romans 12:6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.
5. The quote here is from Psalm 68:18 and there is one slight alteration in the quote. In the psalm it says that he received gifts from men and Paul wrote that he gave gifts to men. No one knows for sure why the change. There is some Aramaic versions of the psalm that actually agree with Paul, but likely Paul is continuing the image painted by the Psalmist of the Victorious King who having received gifts, now distributes them to his subjects as would have easily been understood by his roman citizen readers.
6. Some have taught based on verses 9 and 10 here that Jesus descended into hell before his resurrection, but that isn't what Paul is saying here. The descending and ascending is in reference to Jesus coming from heaven to earth and returning to heaven once again.

ii. The Function of Our Gifts: Service (11-13).

1. **Ephesians 4:11-13** – It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

2. These gifts focus on the particular function of each gifted individual. This passage is not primarily about establishing certain roles or offices of the church. Any believer can exercise these gifts whether they have a title or not.
3. One thing that it is communicating is that when these gifts are exercised properly that God's people will be adequately equipped for service. A couple of key ideas that we want to take away from this.
 - a. We all need to be equipped or disciplined by other believers who are exercising their spiritual gifting. None of us come to Jesus fully equipped for everything God wants us to do.
 - b. Christian ministry is never a solo gig. We should constantly be looking to train, disciple and raise up new people to serve and use their gifts. If your ministry can't survive without you then you are doing something wrong.
 - c. You have a gift and a job to do. If you aren't serving Jesus and His Church in some way shape or form, then you are not

experiencing the fullness of the Christian life. You are immature.

- d. Service is never complete. We are all continuing to grow in becoming like Christ and since service is part of that then you never retire from Christian service in this life. That doesn't mean your ministry is always the same it may change over the years.

iii. The Result of Our Gifts: Maturity (14-16).

1. **Ephesians 4:14-16** - Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
2. Isn't it great when little kids are learning what money is all about but they don't yet know the different values of the various coins or that one dollar bill isn't the same thing as a twenty dollar bill. Last month my youngest son Micah turned four and he was lucky enough to get twenty dollars in his card from one of his aunts. To him it was merely a dollar, so we traded and Dad got some extra Starbucks. (No Not Really)!

How many of you ever did that when you were kids with younger siblings and trick them into taking a nickel for a dime because the nickel was bigger?

3. This is the idea that Paul is talking about. When we are young in the faith it can be easy to get confused about complicated doctrines and we can be easily influenced to believe something that just isn't true.
 - a. Example of Wes and I doing evangelism in Alaska with the Bahai.
4. Paul's desire is for every believer to be mature in their faith in Christ and their understanding of God's Word. Furthermore his anticipation here is that when we are mature that we will be able to lovingly teach others the truth of God's word even when it might not be a "popular" truth.
5. Paul closes this section in verse 16 with a reminder that while the Christian life begins, continues and ends with Jesus, God has chosen to work through each one of us to accomplish his good and perfect will in the lives of others.

VII. Conclusion

- a. VIDEO – The Body of Christ