

Church Matters

The **Unity** of the Church

TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- 1 Open your Bible to Ephesians 4:1-16. Let's see what we can learn about the unity of the church...
- 2 Paul "implored" believers to "walk in a manner worthy of our salvation calling". Look up "implore" at <Dictionary.com>. What do you learn? **Why** do you think Paul feels so strongly about our lifestyle?
- 3 Why do you think Paul reminds them that he is "the prisoner of the Lord"?
- 4 Paul describes a lifestyle worthy of our Christian calling as "humble, gentle, patient, and tolerant". On the following scale, mark your own level of each quality, with an "**H**", "**G**", "**P**" and a "**T**".
 - +
- 5 How do you feel about the maturity of your "Christian walk"? Which quality do you most need to grow?

Paul wrote both Ephesians and Colossians. These books show striking similarity, but the dissimilarities are equally illuminating. Consider the chart below; words colored the same are identical Greek words. What does the content unique to each text reveal to you about the concepts they have in common?

Ephesians 4:2-3	Colossians 3:12-13
With all humility and gentleness , with patience , showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.	Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility , gentleness and patience ; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you

- 6
- 7 In v. 3-6 Paul **belabors** the point of oneness and unity—and **then** he signals contrast and distinction ("**but**" in v. 7 and "**some...some...some...some**" in v. 11). How is it possible to have **unity without uniformity**?
- 8 After emphasizing the diverse gifting God dispenses according to his own desires, Paul then returns to emphasizing our unified, common experience: we **all** contribute to **all** of us becoming like Christ (4:12-16). At TCC, do we see all of us "attaining to the full measure of the stature of Christ" (v. 13)?
Why do you think that is? Are any key elements of Ephesians 4:11-16 weak or missing at TCC? If so, which ones?
- 9 What do you think can be done about it...organizationally? ...individually?

- 1 After everyone has opened his Bible to Ephesians 4:1-16, ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. Have folks keep their Bibles open—you'll be referring to them often.
- 2 Implore = "to beg urgently or piteously". Clearly you do this when it is extremely important and/or urgent. Acts 20:28 says "Be on guard...for the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Christ paid dearly to purchase our unity. We must value it, and work to preserve it.
- 3 Of course, we can only speculate. He's said it to the Ephesians twice now (see 3:1), so we can see that it's very important to him. Paul wasn't one to seek sympathy or manipulate people, so the reason needed to be that somehow it benefits the Ephesians to be reminded of his imprisonment. Explore possibilities with your group.
- 4 Take a minute for everyone to mark their scales. Then briefly share yours, and invite others to do the same.
- 5 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!)
- 6 Excluding the words shared in common, and focusing on the uniquenesses of each passage, we learn:
 - love is what enables us to tolerate difficult people (Ephesians)
 - forgiveness is necessary if we are to preserve Christian unity (Colossians)
 - having been forgiven by God, we are obligated to forgive everyone (Colossians)
 - "peace" is our bond (Ephesians)—whatever that means!
- 7 Uniformity means everyone's the same. That would be like having a football team in which everyone plays the same position. That would be a disaster! Disunity would be a football team in which you have all the positions covered, but everyone cares only about his own accomplishments. Unity without uniformity would be a well-coordinated team with each position playing his role, for the sake of the team.
- 8 This is an opinion question. Encourage honesty. Avoid grumbling. But also avoid superficiality. Be prepared to share your own opinion—positives and negatives—without getting into a blame game.
- 9 Ditto. Be constructive. Try to determine not only things you can suggest to church leadership, but also things you can do totally on your own—grass roots.

Sermon Summary **Key Text: Ephesians 4:1-16**

Each year, Americans waste \$10 billion in unwanted Christmas gifts. Most surprisingly, of those unwanted gifts, more than half of them just get stashed in the closet or under the bed. Each year, billions of dollars and millions of good intentions are just thrown away! Ephesians 4:1-16 tells us of **three priceless gifts** God has given us.

I. The Gift of the Gospel (v. 1) In Ephesians 1-3 we learned about God’s priceless gift of salvation, and now in chapter 4 Paul turns to practical application. We learn that our appropriate response to God’s generosity is to “walk in a manner worthy of our gospel calling”. In the rest of Ephesians Paul will address specific ways to “walk worthy”, but he begins by talking about our relationship with the church—which is one of the greatest gifts God has given us.

II. The Gift of the Church (v. 2-6) Before he tells us what to do, Paul begins with our proper attitudes: humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance. These attitudes make it clear that relationships in the church aren’t always easy, but they help us preserve the unity of the church. Christ has unified us, but we must preserve it—and that requires effort and urgency! No matter all our differences, we must remember: there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father over all! God gave us a unified church; our response is to protect that unity.

III. The Gift of Ministry (v. 7-16) Catch the contrast in v. 7: after establishing all our similarities in v. 4-6, Paul now says we’re all different! The “Great Giver of Gifts” (v. 8-10) measured out just the right gift for each individual. Jesus descended—he lived, died, and rose again as a man—and ascended—far above the heavens—equipping each of us for ministry. Christians have a God-given obligation to use our gifts to build up the local church. How long? “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (v. 13).

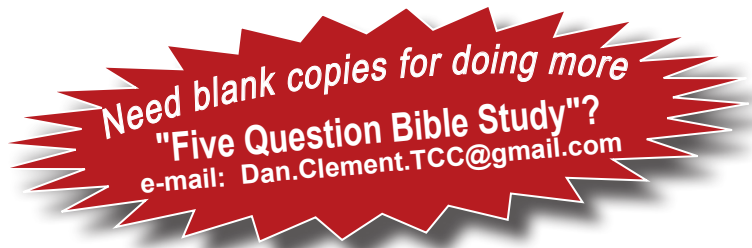
If you are a Christian, God has given you three priceless gifts:

- He has given us the gift of the Gospel—may we live lives worthy of it.
- He has given us the gift of this church—may we protect the unity he has established.
- He has given us the gift of ministry—may we serve him and build up this body.


Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time


Whose church is it anyway? Who's in charge around here?
"Five Question Bible Study" is a great way to learn more about Christian unity...


Monday—Study Romans 12:1-2
Tuesday—Study Romans 12:3-5
Wednesday—Study Romans 12:6-8
Thursday—Study Romans 12:9-13
Friday—Study Romans 12:14-16
Saturday—Study Romans 12:17-21




Bible Text: _____ Date: _____

 What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]

 What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?

 What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?

 What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.

 With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]