

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is centered over the open pages.

Let's Walk Together

Scripture text: **Ephesians 4:1-16**

LET'S WALK TOGETHER

Ephesians 4:1–16

All of Paul's letters contain a beautiful balance between doctrine and duty, and Ephesians is the perfect example. The first three chapters deal with doctrine, our riches in Christ, while **the last three chapters explain duty, our responsibilities in Christ.** The key word in this last half of the book is **walk** (Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15), while the key idea in the first half is wealth. In these last three chapters, Paul admonishes us **to walk in unity** (Eph. 4:1–16), **purity** (Eph. 4:17–5:17), **harmony** (Eph. 5:18–6:9), and **victory** (Eph. 6:10–24).

These four “walks” perfectly parallel the basic doctrines Paul has taught us in the first three chapters.

Before we look at this section in detail, we must note two important words in Ephesians 4:1: therefore and beseech [urge]. The word therefore indicates that Paul is basing his exhortations to duty on the doctrines taught in the first three chapters. (Rom. 12:1–2 are parallel verses.)

The Christian life is not based on ignorance but knowledge, and the better we understand Bible doctrine, the easier it is to obey Bible duties.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual worship.** Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God,** what is good and acceptable and perfect.

When people say, “Don’t talk to me about doctrine—just let me live my Christian life!” they are **revealing their ignorance of the way the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer.** “

“It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you live right” is a similar confession of ignorance.

It does make a difference what you believe, **because what you believe determines how you behave!**

Our Wealth

Called by grace to belong to His body (chap. 1)

Raised from the dead (2:1–10)

Reconciled (2:11–22)

Christ’s **victory** over Satan is the mystery (chap. 3)

Our Walk

Walk worthy of your calling—the unity of the Body
(4:1–16)

Put off the grave clothes (4:17–5:17); **walk** in the
purity

Walk in harmony (5:18–6:9)

Walk in victory (6:10–24)

The word beseech indicates that God, in love, urges us to live for His glory. He does not say, as He did to the Old Testament Jews, “If you obey Me, I will bless you.” Rather, He says, “I have already blessed you—now, in response to My love and grace, obey Me.”

He has given us such a marvelous calling in Christ;
now it is our responsibility to live up to that calling.

The main idea in these first sixteen verses **is the unity of believers in Christ.** This is simply the practical application of the doctrine taught in the first half of the letter: **God is building a body, a temple.** He has **reconciled** Jews and Gentiles to Himself in Christ. The oneness of believers in Christ **is already a spiritual reality. Our responsibility is to guard, protect, and preserve that unity.** To do this, we must understand four important facts.

1. The Grace of Unity (Eph. 4:1–3)

Unity is not uniformity.

Unity comes from within and is a spiritual grace, while uniformity is the result of pressure from without.

Paul used the human body as a picture of Christian unity (1 Cor. 12), and he adapts the same illustration here in this section (Eph. 4:13–16). **Each part of the body is different from the other parts, yet all make up one body and work together.**

If we are going to preserve the “unity of the Spirit,” we must possess the necessary Christian graces, and there are seven of them listed here.

The first is **lowliness, or humility**. Someone has said, “Humility is that grace that, **when you know you have it, you have lost it.**” Humility means putting Christ first, others second, and self last. It means knowing ourselves, accepting ourselves, and being ourselves **to the glory of God**. God does not condemn you when you accept yourself and your gifts (Rom. 12:3). **He just does not want us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to**—or less highly than we ought to.

Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**, but to think with sober judgment, each **according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

Meekness is not weakness. It is power under control.
Moses was a meek man (Num. 12:3), yet see the tremendous power he exercised. Jesus Christ was “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29), yet He drove the money changers from the temple. In the Greek language, this word was used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind. In each case you have power, but **that power is under control.**

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Allied with meekness is **long-suffering**, which literally means “**long-tempered**,” the ability to endure discomfort without fighting back.

This leads to the mentioning of forbearance, a **grace that cannot be experienced apart from love**. “Love suffereth long and is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4).

Actually, Paul is describing some of the “**fruit of the Spirit**” (Gal. 5:22–23); for the “unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3) **is the result of the believer “walking in the Spirit”** (Gal. 5:16).

The next grace that contributes to the unity of the Spirit is **endeavor**. Literally it reads “**being eager to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit.**” “It’s great that you love each other,” I once heard a seasoned saint say to a newly wedded couple, “**but if you’re going to be happy in marriage, you gotta work at it!**” The verb used here is a present participle, which means we must **constantly be endeavoring to maintain this unity.** In fact, when we think the situation is the best, Satan will move in to wreck it. The spiritual unity of a home, a Sunday School class, or a church **is the responsibility of each person involved, and the job never ends.**

The final grace is peace—“**the bond of peace.**” Read James 3:13–4:10 for the most vivid treatment of war and peace in the New Testament.

Note that the reason for war on the outside is war on the inside. **If a believer cannot get along with God, he cannot get along with other believers.** When “the peace of God” rules in our hearts, then we build unity (Col. 3:15).

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

2. The Ground of Unity (Eph. 4:4–6)

Many people today attempt to unite Christians in a way that is not biblical. For example, they will say: “We are not interested in doctrines, but in love. Now, let’s forget our doctrines and just love one another!”

But Paul did not discuss spiritual unity in the first three chapters; **he waited until he had laid the doctrinal foundation.** While not all Christians agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, they all do agree **on the foundation truths of the faith.** Unity built on anything other than Bible truth is standing on a very shaky foundation.

Paul names here the seven basic spiritual realities that unite all true Christians.

a. One body. This is, of course, the body of Christ in which each believer is a member, placed there at conversion by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:12–31). The one body is the model for the many local bodies that God has established across the world.

The fact that a person is a member of the one body does not excuse him from belonging to a local body, for it is there that he exercises his spiritual gifts and helps others to grow.

b. One Spirit. The same Holy Spirit indwells each believer, so that we belong to each other in the Lord. There are perhaps a dozen references to the Holy Spirit in Ephesians, because He is important to us in the living of the Christian life.

c. One hope of your calling. This refers **to the return of the Lord to take His church to heaven.** The Holy Spirit within is the assurance of this great promise (Eph. 1:13–14). Paul is suggesting here that the believer who realizes the existence of the one body, who walks in the Spirit, and who looks for the Lord's return, **is going to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker.**

d. One Lord.

This is our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, lives for us, and one day will come for us. **It is difficult to believe that two believers can claim to obey the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity.**

Someone asked Gandhi, the spiritual leader of India, “What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?” He replied, “**Christians.**” Acknowledging **the lordship of Christ** is a giant step toward spiritual unity among His people.

e. One faith.

There is one settled body of truth deposited by Christ in His church, and this is “**the faith.**” Jude calls it “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

The early Christians recognized a body of basic doctrine that they taught, guarded, and committed to others (2 Tim. 2:2). Christians may differ in some matters of interpretation and church practice; but **all true Christians agree on “the faith”**—and to depart from “the faith” is to bring about disunity within the body of Christ.

f. One baptism.

Since Paul is here discussing the one body, this “one baptism” is probably **the baptism of the Spirit, that act of the Spirit when He places the believing sinner into the body of Christ at conversion (1 Cor. 12:13).**

This is not an experience after conversion, nor is it an experience the believer should pray for or seek after. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), but we are never commanded to be baptized with the Spirit, for we have already been baptized by the Spirit at conversion. As far as the one body is concerned, there is one baptism—the baptism of the Spirit.

But as far as local bodies of believers are concerned, **there are two baptisms**: the baptism of the Spirit, and water baptism.

g. One God and Father.

Paul likes to emphasize God as Father (Eph. 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 5:20). The marvelous oneness of believers **in the family of God is evident here**, for God is over all, and working through all, and in all. **We are children in the same family, loving and serving the same Father, so we ought to be able to walk together in unity.**

Just as in an earthly family, the various members **have to give and take in order to keep a loving unity in the home**, so God's heavenly family must do the same.

The "Lord's Prayer" opens with "**Our Father**" —not "**My Father.**"

Paul is quite concerned that Christians not break the unity of the Spirit by agreeing with false doctrine (Rom. 16:17–20), and the Apostle John echoes this warning (2 John 6–11).

Romans 16:17-20 I appeal to you, brothers, to **watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.** For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, **but their own appetites**, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. **For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

2 John 1:6-11 And this is love, **that we walk according to his commandments**; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so **that you should walk in it**. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, **those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh**. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. **Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for**, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. **Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son**. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, **do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works**.

The local church cannot believe in peace at any price, for God's wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17).

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits**, impartial and sincere.

Purity of doctrine of itself does not produce spiritual unity, for there are churches that are sound in faith, **but unsound when it comes to love.**

This is why Paul joins the two: "**speaking the truth in love**" (Eph. 4:15).

3. The Gifts for Unity (Eph. 4:7–11)

Paul moves now from what all Christians have in common **to how Christians differ from each other.** He is discussing variety and individuality within the unity of the Spirit. **God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:1–12), and this gift is to be used for the unifying and edifying (building up) of the body of Christ.** We must make a distinction between “spiritual gifts” and natural abilities. When you were born into this world God gave you certain natural abilities, perhaps in mechanics, art, athletics, or music.

In this regard, **all men are not created equal**, because some are smarter, or stronger, or more talented than others. But **in the spiritual realm, each believer has at least one spiritual gift no matter what natural abilities he may or may not possess.**

A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.

How does the believer discover and develop his gifts?

By fellowshiping with other Christians in the local assembly.

Gifts are not toys to play with. They are tools to build with. And if they are not used in love, they become weapons to fight with, which is what happened in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 12–14). **Christians are not to live in isolation, for after all, they are members of the same body.**

Paul taught that **Christ is the Giver of these gifts, through the Holy Spirit** (Eph. 4:8–10). He ascended to heaven as Victor forevermore. The picture here is of a military conqueror leading his captives and **sharing the spoil with his followers.** Only in this case, the “captives” are not His enemies, but **His own.**

Sinners who once were held captives by sin and Satan **have now been taken captive by Christ.** Even death itself is a defeated foe! When He came to earth, Christ experienced the depths of humiliation (Phil. 2:5–11), but when He ascended to heaven, He experienced the very highest exaltation possible. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, applying to Jesus Christ a victory song written by David (Eph. 4:8).

There are three lists of spiritual gifts given in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–31; Romans 12:3–8; and Ephesians 4:11. Since these lists are not identical, **it may be that Paul has not named all the gifts that are available.**

Paul wrote that some gifts are more important than others, but that **all believers are needed if the body is to function normally** (1 Cor. 14:5, 39). Paul named, not so much “gifts” as **the gifted men God has placed in the church**, and there are four of them.

Apostles (v. 11a). The word means “**one who is sent with a commission.**” Jesus had many disciples, but He selected 12 Apostles (Matt. 10:1–4). A disciple is a “follower” or a “learner,” but **an apostle is a “divinely appointed representative.”** The **Apostles were to give witness of the Resurrection** (Acts 1:15–22), and therefore **had to have seen the risen Christ personally** (1 Cor. 9:1–2).

There are no apostles today in the strictest New Testament sense. These men helped to lay the foundation of the church—**“the foundation laid by the Apostles and prophets”** (Eph. 2:20), and once the foundation was laid, **they were no longer needed.**

God authenticated their ministry with special miracles (Heb. 2:1–4), so we should not demand these same miracles today. Of course, in a broad sense, **all Christians have an apostolic ministry.** “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). **But we must not claim to be apostles.**

Prophets (v. 11b). We commonly associate a prophet with predictions of future events, but **this is not his primary function.** A New Testament prophet is one who **proclaims the Word of God** (Acts 11:28; Eph. 3:5). Believers in the New Testament churches did not possess Bibles, nor was the New Testament written and completed. How, then, would these local assemblies discover God's will? **His Spirit would share God's truth with those possessing the gift of prophecy.** Paul suggests that the gift of prophecy **had to do with understanding** "all mysteries and all knowledge" (1 Cor. 13:2), meaning, of course, spiritual truths.

The purpose of prophecy is “edification, encouragement, and consolation” (1 Cor. 14:3, literal translation).

Christians today do not get their spiritual knowledge immediately **from the Holy Spirit, but mediately through the Spirit teaching the Word.**

With the Apostles, the prophets had a foundational ministry in the early church and **they are not needed today (Eph. 2:20).**

Evangelists (v. 11c). “Bearers of the Good News.”

These men traveled from place to place to preach the Gospel and win the lost (Acts 8:26–40; 21:28). **All ministers should “do the work of an evangelist,”** but this does not mean that all ministers are evangelists.

2Timothy 4:5 *As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

The Apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church, and the evangelists built on it by winning the lost to Christ.

Of course, **in the early church, every believer was a witness** (Acts 2:41–47; 11:19–21), and **so should we be witnesses today**. But there are people also today who have been called to evangelism. The fact that a believer may not possess this calling **does not excuse him from being burdened for lost souls or witnessing to them**.

Pastors and teachers (v. 11d). The fact that the word “some” is not repeated indicates that we have here **one office with two ministries**.

Pastor means “**shepherd**,” indicating that the local church is a flock of sheep (Acts 20:28), and **it is his responsibility to feed and lead the flock** (1 Peter 5:1–4, where “**elder**” is another name for “pastor”).

He does this by means of the Word of God, the food that nourishes the sheep. The Word is the staff that guides and disciplines the sheep. **The Word of God is the local church’s protection and provision**, and no amount of entertainment, good fellowship, or other religious substitutes can take its place.