

## **Ephesians Chapter 4:**

### **Introduction**

Ephesians 4 is a key chapter in the Epistle to the Ephesians, marking a pivotal shift from theological exposition in the first three chapters to practical instructions for Christian living in the latter half of the letter. Here, Paul exhorts believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling, emphasizing unity in the church, the proper use of spiritual gifts, and living a transformed life in Christ. This chapter highlights both the individual responsibility and the communal nature of the Christian walk, offering essential insights into the nature of the Church, the unity of the Spirit, and the call for personal holiness.

### **Historical and Cultural Context**

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul, likely while he was in prison in Rome (c. 60-62 AD). The audience of the letter is the Christian community in Ephesus, a major city in the Roman Empire located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Ephesus was a hub of commerce, politics, and culture, with a famous temple to the goddess Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The city had a large pagan population, and its Christian community was predominantly Gentile, which created tension as these new believers navigated their faith in a world hostile to their message.

Paul had visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18) and spent approximately three years there on his third journey (Acts 19). During his time in Ephesus, he established a strong church, and later, he sent this letter as a circular epistle to encourage them in their walk with Christ.

### **Structure of Ephesians Chapter 4:**

Ephesians 4 can be divided into the following sections:

1. **The Call to Live Worthy of the Calling (Ephesians 4:1-6)**
2. **The Gifts Christ Gave to the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16)**
3. **Living Out the New Life in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24)**
4. **Practical Exhortations for Christian Living (Ephesians 4:25-32)**

### **1. The Call to Live Worthy of the Calling (Ephesians 4:1-6)**

Paul begins chapter 4 by urging the Ephesians to live a life that is worthy of the calling they have received. This is a call to unity, humility, and peace among believers, as they are part of one body, under one Spirit, and following one Lord.

### **Key Greek Words and Verbs:**

- **“Worthy”** (Greek: *axios* - ἀξίως): This word carries the sense of balancing a scale, meaning that the believer’s conduct should "measure up" to the high calling they have in Christ. It's a call to ethical and moral consistency with the gospel.

- **“Calling”** (Greek: *klesis* - κλήσις): Refers to the divine invitation into the fellowship of God's kingdom, a call to salvation and a new life in Christ. This calling is not just individual but communal.
- **“Unity”** (Greek: *henotes* - ἐνότης): The Greek word stresses the oneness of believers in the body of Christ. This unity is not based on uniformity of thought or personality but on a shared faith in Christ.
- **“Peace”** (Greek: *eirēnē* - εἰρήνη): Not just the absence of conflict but the presence of wholeness, harmony, and reconciliation.

### **Theological Concepts:**

- **The Unity of the Church:** The foundational truth in this passage is the oneness of the church, which is rooted in the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This unity is not a mere social or organizational agreement but a deep, spiritual oneness that reflects the nature of God.
- **Humility, Gentleness, and Patience:** These are marks of a worthy walk. Christians are to bear with one another in love, prioritizing the unity of the body over personal preference or division.

## **2. The Gifts Christ Gave to the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16)**

Paul continues by highlighting the diversity of spiritual gifts that Christ bestows upon believers for the building up of the body. These gifts include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, all designed to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to help the church grow in maturity.

### **Key Greek Words and Verbs:**

- **“Grace”** (Greek: *charis* - χάρις): This refers to the unmerited favor of God, through which spiritual gifts are given. These gifts are not earned but are freely bestowed upon believers according to God's sovereign will.
- **“Equip”** (Greek: *katartismos* - καταρτισμός): A term often used for the process of preparing or restoring something to a proper state. Here, it refers to the equipping of believers for the work of ministry, and the maturing of the saints.
- **“Building up”** (Greek: *oikodomeō* - οικοδομέω): This verb means to build or edify, indicating that the goal of these gifts is to grow the church, making it stronger in faith, love, and maturity.
- **“Maturity”** (Greek: *teleiōtēs* - τελειότης): The goal of the church is spiritual maturity, to reach "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13). It signifies the perfection and completeness that comes as believers grow in Christlikeness.

### **Theological Concepts:**

- **The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts:** Spiritual gifts are not for personal glorification but for the edification of the body of Christ. They are given for the purpose of building up the church, bringing believers to maturity, and equipping them for service in God's kingdom.

- **The Role of the Church in Maturing Believers:** The church, through the proper exercise of these gifts, helps believers grow in knowledge, unity, and Christlikeness. This maturity leads to a stable faith that is not easily swayed by false teaching or worldly influences.

### 3. Living Out the New Life in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24)

Paul calls the Ephesians to live differently from the Gentiles, who are characterized by futility of mind, darkened understanding, and a lack of sensitivity to God. Believers, on the other hand, are to be renewed in the spirit of their minds and to put on the new self, created in righteousness and holiness.

#### Key Greek Words and Verbs:

- **“Futility of the mind”** (Greek: *mataiotēs* - ματαιότης): Refers to a life without purpose or meaning, where individuals live according to the wisdom of the world rather than according to God's truth.
- **“Put off”** (Greek: *apotithēmi* - ἀποτίθωμαι): This verb means to lay aside or remove, as in shedding old garments. Paul calls believers to put off their old sinful ways, which belong to their former life.
- **“Put on”** (Greek: *endύomai* - ἐνδύομαι): This verb suggests the act of dressing oneself in new clothes. The new self is characterized by righteousness and holiness.
- **“Renew”** (Greek: *ananēōō* - ἀνανεόω): This verb means "to make new" or "to restore." Believers are to experience a continual renewal of the mind, aligning their thoughts and attitudes with God's will.

#### Theological Concepts:

- **Sanctification and Transformation:** Christians are called to undergo a radical transformation of both mind and behavior. The process of sanctification involves putting off the old self (the old way of thinking and living) and putting on the new self (a life that reflects the character of Christ).
- **New Identity in Christ:** The transformation of the believer's life is rooted in their new identity in Christ. The old self is corrupt and deceitful, but the new self is created in the likeness of God, reflecting His righteousness and holiness.

### 4. Practical Exhortations for Christian Living (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Paul concludes the chapter with a series of practical instructions for how Christians should live in light of their new identity in Christ. These include speaking truthfully, avoiding anger, not stealing, speaking only what is helpful, and practicing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

#### Key Greek Words and Verbs:

- **“Speak the truth”** (Greek: *alētheuō* - ἀληθεύω): Truthfulness is a core Christian virtue. The verb means to speak truthfully, in contrast to falsehood, which breaks the unity of the body.

- **“Be angry but do not sin”** (Greek: *orgizō* - ὀργίζω): While anger itself is not sinful, it must be managed righteously. Paul warns against letting anger lead to sin or division.
- **“Forgive”** (Greek: *charizomai* - χαρίζομαι): This verb comes from the same root as *charis* (grace), emphasizing that forgiveness should be an act of grace, just as Christ forgave us.
- **“Kindness”** (Greek: *chrestotes* - χρηστότης): Refers to moral excellence in character, showing a disposition of kindness, goodness, and gentleness toward others.

### **Theological Concepts:**

- **Holiness and Ethical Living:** Ethical living is a natural outgrowth of the believer's new identity in Christ. This involves both what Christians refrain from (e.g., lying, anger, stealing) and what they actively pursue (e.g., truth, kindness, forgiveness).
- **Imitating Christ:** The call to forgive as Christ forgave and to walk in kindness and compassion reflects the character of Christ. Believers are to mirror God's love and grace in their relationships with one another.

### **Application for Today's Christian**

- **Live in Unity:** Christians are called to live in unity despite differences. The unity of the body of Christ is vital, and it requires humility, gentleness, and patience.
- **Embrace Spiritual Gifts:** Every believer has spiritual gifts that contribute to the growth of the body of Christ. Christians should seek to identify and use these gifts for the edification of the church.
- **Pursue Holiness:** Christians are called to live a transformed life, putting off old sinful habits and embracing new Christlike behaviors. This is an ongoing process of sanctification.
- **Reflect Christ's Character:** Believers should imitate Christ in their relationships, showing grace, forgiveness, and kindness to others. This reflects the love and unity that the gospel creates in the Church.

### **Summary**

Ephesians 4 provides practical instructions for Christian living rooted in the gospel's transformative power. Paul emphasizes unity, the proper use of spiritual gifts, and ethical living. Christians are called to live out their new identity in Christ, pursuing holiness and reflecting God's character in their relationships. The chapter is a call to build the Church up in love, maturity, and unity, with Christ as the head.

### **Study Questions:**

#### **Section 1: The Call to Unity (Ephesians 4:1-6)**

1. What does it mean to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (v. 1)? How can we practically apply this in our everyday relationships within the church?

2. Paul mentions humility, gentleness, patience, and love as virtues that promote unity (vv. 2-3). How do these qualities challenge the way we typically handle conflict or differences with others?
3. In verse 4, Paul emphasizes the unity of the Spirit. What does this unity look like in a diverse church, and how can we promote it in a culture that often emphasizes division?
4. Paul stresses the oneness of the body in verses 4-6 (one body, one Spirit, one Lord, etc.). How does this truth challenge or encourage you in your role as part of the Body of Christ?

## Section 2: The Gifts Christ Gave to the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16)

5. In verse 7, Paul says that each believer has received grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. How does knowing that your spiritual gifts are given by Christ himself shape how you view your gifts and their role in the church?
6. Paul lists different ministry gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) in verse 11. How can you recognize these gifts in the church today, and how do they contribute to building up the body of Christ?
7. In verses 12-13, Paul explains that the purpose of these gifts is to equip believers for the work of ministry. What does "maturity in the faith" look like, and how can we help each other grow in it?
8. Verse 14 warns against being "tossed back and forth by the waves" of false teaching. How can we protect ourselves and our church community from being led astray by false ideas or teachings?
9. How does the idea of "speaking the truth in love" (v. 15) guide how we should approach difficult conversations or disagreements within the body of Christ?

## Section 3: Living Out the New Life in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24)

10. In verses 17-19, Paul describes the old life as futile, darkened, and separated from God. What are some areas in your life where you feel the old self still influences you, and how can you "put off" that old self?
11. Verse 22 calls us to "put off your old self" and "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." What does this transformation look like in your personal life? Are there specific areas where you struggle to embrace the "new self"?
12. What role does the renewal of the mind (v. 23) play in our daily walk with Christ? How can we actively renew our minds to align more closely with God's will?

## Section 4: Practical Exhortations for Christian Living (Ephesians 4:25-32)

13. In verses 25-27, Paul encourages truth-telling and reconciliation. How can we practice honesty and openness in our relationships with others, especially when there's tension or conflict?
14. Paul warns against "letting the sun go down while you are still angry" (v. 26). What are some practical steps we can take to manage our anger and avoid letting it fester?
15. In verse 28, Paul tells believers not to steal but to work so they can share with others. How does this principle apply to how we view our work and wealth in today's world?

16. Verses 29-30 emphasize the importance of our speech and how it affects others. How can we cultivate speech that builds others up and reflects God's grace?
17. Verse 32 calls Christians to forgive others just as Christ forgave us. Why is forgiveness so important in the life of a believer, and how can we develop a heart of forgiveness when we've been wronged?

### General Reflection and Application

18. What has God specifically been speaking to you through this chapter? Is there a particular verse or concept that has challenged or encouraged you?
19. How can our small group embody the unity and maturity that Paul describes in Ephesians 4? What are some tangible ways we can encourage each other to live out these principles?
20. As you reflect on the whole chapter, how do you see the church's role in God's larger plan for the world? What does it look like for us to actively contribute to God's mission through the way we live together as a community?