

Grow Into the Body

Ephesians 4

Week of September 29-October 5

The focus of the previous three chapters has been largely on the wonderful things God has done for us – how amazingly “rich” we are in blessings from God. We have been saved by the grace of God, we are part of God’s family, we have all been made equal in Christ. Having outlined these blessings, the tone of the letter now shifts to the practical implications of these grand truths. Paul teaches about how salvation and unity should be expressed in our daily living.

Objective: Understand the importance of unity, and how our actions can maintain (or destroy) unity. Recognize some of the characteristics we should be striving for as children of God.

1. **Opening Discussion: What did you learn about God and yourself through your experience this week?** (The commitment you made last week.)

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

2. **Based on all we have learned in the previous chapters, how do you feel about Paul’s urging to “live a life worthy of your calling”? Does this sound difficult? Easy? Worthwhile?**
3. **On what basis are Christians called to live a life of unity? What things unite us?**
4. **How do the qualities in verses 2 and 3 promote unity? (How does the absence of these qualities promote dis-unity?)**

5. **Christians are all united by what we share. Yet we are all unique as well. According to this passage, what is the source of our uniqueness? What are the purposes of our uniqueness?**

6. **Compare and contrast the traits of “spiritual infants” versus “spiritual maturity” as presented in Ephesians 4:14-16.**

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

This is the first part of a section about “Living as Children of the Light.” The remainder of the section will be covered in chapter 5 - next week’s lesson.

7. **In this section Paul lists several characteristics of the life of the “ungodly” or those who do not know God. They are listed in the left column below. In the right column write the opposite of these.**

Life without God	The opposite – increasingly true of those who know God
Futile thinking	
Darkened understanding	
Separated from the life of God	
Ignorance	
Hardened hearts	
Lost all sensitivity	
Given themselves over to sensuality	
Indulge in every kind of impurity	
Continual lust for more	

8. **Based on what you discovered in the table above, what is most striking about these contrasting characteristics? Which one do you feel has the most practical implications for you right now?**

9. **What attitude does Paul encourage in these verses? What role does attitude/mind/thinking seem to play in our living as God's children?**

In these verses Paul uses the imagery of “putting on” our new self and therefore “putting off” the traits of our old sinful selves. Some of the sinful traits he mentions are: falsehood, sin in anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, fighting, slander and malice. Notice that not only does Paul tell us not to do these things, but he always elaborates a bit more – telling us the positive traits to replace them with.

10. **Make special note of the “whys” Paul gives. Choose two of these “whys”. List them below, and elaborate on how they function.**
(For example: “avoid falsehood and speak truthfully because we are all members of one body.” Because all Christians are part of one body, that should be motivation to treat each other with dignity, respect and integrity – truthfulness.)

Apply

11. **Pick two of the “old self” traits. Describe how they might appear in your life today. Be specific – try to recall specific instances. Then describe what the situation would look like if you were to replace the negative trait with a positive one.**

12. Decide on ONE thing you would like to do based on what you have studied here. Share it with your group and commit to doing it for the upcoming week. Be prepared to share your experience with the group.

This week I commit to:

****See notes on question #13 in week one for tips on this exercise.****

Ideas for this week include:

- Complete a spiritual gifts assessment to help you determine what your spiritual gifts are.
- Spend 15 minutes each day in prayer/brainstorming asking God what he would like you to do toward helping the body of Christ to be built up and move toward spiritual maturity. Toward the end of the week decide on one action step to take based on your prayers.
- Look closely at Ephesians 4:28. You (hopefully!) aren't making a living by stealing, but this encourages us to take a look at our motivation for work and our attitude toward what we receive. Evaluate your own attitudes and motivation.
- Choose one of the traits we are encouraged to "put off". Focus especially on "putting off" this trait in your life this week.
- ****Remember – these are only ideas! Feel free to come up with your own commitment.****