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# A Worthy Walk

## Walking In Unity

### Ephesians 4:1-6

#### Introduction

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1. On the night before our Lord prayed a prayer to His Father which the apostle John records for us in chapter 17 of his gospel.
2. In that prayer He uttered these words:

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20-21)
3. It has always been our Lord’s desire that there be unity in His church.
4. Here, in chapter four of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians he addresses this concept of unity.
5. Paul has spent the first three chapters of this letter focusing on all that God has done for believers, both then and now.

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6. In the beginning of chapter four Paul begins with these words, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1, NASB95).
  - a. “Worthy” (*Gk. axios*) — idea of weight
  - b. English word *axiom* — “something of equal weight”
  - c. In an equation the axiom indicates doing something to each side of the equation so that it remains true.

7. What Paul is saying is that we should try to live our lives in a way equal to the blessings which he has just described in chapters 1 - 3.<sup>1</sup>
8. Our natural response is to ask the question, "How do we walk worthy?"
9. Throughout the remainder of the book, Paul answers this question.
10. His immediate charge in this chapter contains two ways to do this:
  - a. First, by walking in *unity* (vv. 1-16)
  - b. Second, by walking in *purity* (vv. 17ff.)
11. It is this first theme of unity that I would like for us to examine tonight (vv. 1-6) and in two weeks we will look at how we walk in purity (vv. 7-16).
20. In the first six verses of this chapter, Paul points to three things concerning this unity:
  - a. The Character Which Brings Unity (v. 2)
  - b. The Divine Origin of Christian Unity (vv. 4-6)
  - c. The Charge to Build Christian Unity (**v. 3**)

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## **I. The Character Which Brings Unity (v. 2)**

"... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love," (Ephesians 4:2, NASB95)

### **A. HUMILITY AND GENTLENESS**

1. In the Greek culture of Paul's day, humility was frowned upon — it was something to be practiced by slaves.
2. However, Paul encourages saints to be humble — there is to be an absence of pride because pride promotes disunity.
3. Coupled with humility is "gentleness" or meekness as it is more often

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<sup>1</sup>Brian Morgan, *Discovery Papers*, Number 624, Ephesians 4:1-10, "God's Design for Community," August 31, 1986, p. 1.

translated.

4. This meekness/gentleness is not weakness, but strength under control.
5. God used it to describe His servant Moses, “Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).
6. Jesus used both of these words to describe Himself, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

**4a**

## **B. PATIENCE AND LOVING TOLERANCE**

1. A person who is patient is not short-tempered, but long-tempered or long-suffering.
2. Coupled with “patience” is the idea of “showing tolerance for one another in love.”
3. This is far more than our simply “tolerating one another” — there must be love.
4. The portrait which the Gospels paint of Peter is a man who is proud, rough, impatient.
5. However, as we look at his first letter which was probably written some thirty years later we find a different man.

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- a. “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22).
- b. “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17).

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- c. “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly,

kindhearted, and humble in spirit” (1 Peter 3:8)

- d. “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8)
- 6. Paul’s message to us here is that Christian unity begins in the attitudes of our hearts — humility, gentleness, *patience* and *loving tolerance* toward one another.
- 7. The unity of the Spirit takes each of us who are different in so many ways (physically, emotionally, mentally) and causes us to live together in a unity that satisfies our souls.
- 8. When we pursue these spiritual fruits and allow them to reign in our hearts and minds, there is Christian unity to the glory of God!

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## **II. The Divine Origin of Christian Unity (vv. 4-6)**

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4–6, NASB95)

### **A. THE HOLY SPIRIT’S WORK IN BRINGING UNITY**

“There is one body and one Spirit,” (v. 4a)

- 1. At the end of chapter three, Paul prayed that we might be “filled up to all the fullness of God” (3:19), a process that involved our Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Here, he helps us see that our unity is also rooted in the Godhead (“Spirit,” v. 4; “Lord,” v. 5; “God,” v. 6).
- 3. It begins with the Holy Spirit creates the body of Christ, the church, of which we are members.
- 4. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit”

(1 Corinthians 12:13).

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3. This Holy Spirit . . .

a. Is Christ's promise to us (1:13; cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13, NASB95)

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b. Guarantees our inheritance (1:14)

"who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."  
(Ephesians 1:14, NASB95)

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c. Fills and empowers us (2:22; 3:16)

"in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22, NASB95)

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"  
(Ephesians 3:16, NASB95)

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**B. CHRIST'S WORK IN MINISTERING UNITY**

"Just as also your were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (4b,5)

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1. The "one Lord" is none other than Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6; Philippians 2:11).

“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him” (1 Corinthians 8:6).

“and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

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2. **As the “one Lord” He creates “one faith” because He is the object and focus of our belief.**
  - a. Paul says that he preached “the faith” (Galatians 1:23).
  - b. Luke writes in Acts 6:7 that “the word of God kept spreading . . . and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”
  - c. Jude speaks of “the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

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3. **Because of our “one faith” we have all participated in “one baptism”** (Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38).
  - a. After commanding His apostles to “preach the gospel to all creation,” Jesus informed them that “he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
  - b. Paul informed the Galatians, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27-28).

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4. It is our faithful response to our Lord in baptism that results in the “one

hope of your calling.”

- a. The hope (confident expectation) of Christ’s return — “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13; ESV).
- b. The hope (confident expectation) of sharing glory with Him — “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2).

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### C. THE FATHER’S WORK IN UNITY

“One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (v. 6)

1. One translation renders this passage as “one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all” (**The Message**)
2. As we saw last week Paul wrote that it is this same Father, “from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (3:15).
3. Our God is . . .
  - a. Transcendent — “over all”
  - b. Omnipresent — “through all and in all”

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## III. The Charge to Build Christian Unity (v. 3)

### A. IT IS AN URGENT NEED

“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3)

1. The NIV translates the first phrase in this verse as “Make every effort . . .”.
2. Literally, Paul is saying, “do your best to preserve the unity of the Spirit . . .”
3. This is tremendously important for the church today — there is no room for rivalries or hatreds or factions.

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**B. PEACEMAKERS ARE REQUIRED**

1. *A peacemaker is characterized by honesty.*
  - a. The prophet Ezekiel warned against those who act as if everything is all right when it is not, who say “‘Peace!’ when there is no peace” (Ezekiel 13:10).
  - b. Such people, according to Ezekiel are merely plastering over cracked walls, and when the rain comes, the walls fall (vv. 10,11).
  - c. Jeremiah used some of the same language, saying, “They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ but there is no peace.” (Jeremiah 6:14).
  - d. The peacemaker is painfully honest about the absence of peace — he admits when he is at odds with others.
  - e. He does not pretend things are OK when they are not.
  - f. The tendency to act as if everything is fine when it is not may cover the wound for the moment, but does not address the greater issue.

**18a**

2. *A peacemaker is willing to risk pain.*
  - a. Anytime someone attempts to bring peace, either in society or personally, he risks misunderstanding and failure.
  - b. If we have been wrong, there is the pain of apologizing.
  - c. Sometimes we may have to endure the pain of rebuking another.
  - d. It is so much easier to let things slide, but that is not the way of a peacemaker.

[These two qualities — honesty about the true status of peace and the willingness to risk pain in pursuing peace — bring us to the last quality.]

**18b**

3. *A peacemaker is a fighter.*



- a. The peacemaker is willing to aggressively pursue peace.
- b. Paul instructed the Christians in Rome to “pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Romans 14:19).
- b. Earlier, he had written, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18).
- c. While as peacemakers we are fighters, we are not thoughtless or quarrelsome — our character is filled with the peace of God.

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:17-18).

## **Conclusion**

- 1. We live in a world of lonely, alienated people who long for a place where there is peace, love and acceptance.
- 2. If they see the Church living out this powerful unity of which Paul speaks with humility, gentleness, patience and loving tolerance, they will be drawn to it.

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- 3. Then the Church will fulfill another aspect of the prayer which Jesus prayed on the night before His crucifixion:

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me” (John 17:22-23).