



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Eph. 4:3-13*

### 1. Unity, Diversity, Ministry, Maturity

- a. "Here...is Paul's vision for the church. God's new society is to display charity [love], unity, diversity & growing maturity. These are the characteristics of 'a life worthy of the calling' (Eph. 4:1)." [John Stott, Message of Ephesians, p. iii]
- b. Eph. 4: The 1st section (Eph. 4:1-6) covers "unity...organically related to the divine intention...The 2nd section (Eph. 4:7-16) introduces the note of diversity & shows how it contributes to the unity of the body, since Christ's giving of gifts...[is] for [the church's] full maturity...The whole paragraph [Eph. 4:1-16]...is concerned about unity, diversity, and maturity... Ministries have been given by Christ...to enable the body of Christ to attain to its ultimate goal, that is, '...unto maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness' (Eph. 4:13)." [Peter T. O'Brien, Ephesians, p. 317]

### 2. Unity (Eph. 4:3b-6, 13)

- a. Unity of the Spirit—defined by 'seven unities' (Eph. 4:3-6)
- b. Unity in the faith & the knowledge of God's Son (Eph. 4:13a)
  - a. "The 'unity of the faith' refers to the contents of what we believe, i.e., Christian doctrine, rather than a vague unity based on 'having faith' or being 'persons of faith'." [Peter Williamson, Ephesians, p. 120]

### 3. Diversity (Eph. 4:7, 11)

- a. Differing gifts & grace 'to each one' (Eph. 4:7)
- b. Gifts given by Christ—"he gave some apostles, some prophets..." (Eph. 4:11)
  - a. "The gifts...in Eph. 4:11 are distinct from the other [spiritual gift] lists in 2 main ways. First, these [gifts] are persons who are given to the church; & these gifts of persons are given, distributed, or allotted by Jesus Christ." [J. D. Bayes, "DIVINE EMPOWERMENT:...EPH. 4:1-16," Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership, Vol. 6, #1 (2014), pp. 115-116]
  - b. "Having achieved dominion over all the powers through his victorious ascent, [Christ] sovereignly distributes gifts to the members of his body. The building of the body is inextricably linked with his intention of filling the universe with his rule, since the church is his instrument in carrying out his purposes for the cosmos." [Peter O'Brien, Ephesians, p. 297]

- a. Differing ministries of various ministers—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors/teachers (Eph. 4:11)
  - a. In Eph. 4:11 “God gives people to serve the Church, and he equips them with the natural & supernatural abilities necessary to fulfill those roles... The gifts are not for the benefit of the individual but for the benefit of the Church.” [Peter Williamson, *Ephesians*, pp. 116, 114]
- b. Variety in ministries—apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc.
- c. Multiple ministers—‘apostles (pl.), prophets (pl.),...teachers (pl.)’ (Eph. 4:11)
  - a. The phrase “‘the work of ministry’ is [often] equated with the professional work of ordained clergy...[But,] in Eph. 4:11-16...Paul’s concept is dynamic & corporate—a sharp contrast with contemporary ideas on ministry...In Eph. 4:11...there are several basic ministries...& they are distributed among several different people. [Often] we have created a ‘one-man-band’ instead of a shared corporate ministry.” [Francis M. Bradley, “Extending the Work of Ministry,” *Living Church*, Vol. 179, p. 12]
  - a. Apostles (Greek: *apostolos*) describes those commissioned to be Jesus’ special representatives. The [first, twelve foundational] apostles were specifically called by Christ (Mt. 10:1-7) & had seen the risen Lord Jesus. They planted & established churches under Jesus Christ, & they had authority to speak & write the words of God, equal in authority to the OT Scriptures. Paul was called as an apostle when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road. Beyond the initial ‘foundational’ apostles (Eph. 2:20) there were other apostles, including women: Junia (Rm. 16:7)
    - a. “Greet Andronicus & Junia...they are prominent among the apostles, & they were in Christ before me.” (Rom. 16:7)
    - b. “Among the leaders recognized at Rome, Junia receives highest marks. Paul greets her and a co-worker named Andronicus as...‘notable among the apostles,’ & ‘in Christ before I was’ (Rom 16.7)...Church tradition from the Old Latin, Coptic, Syriac & Vulgate versions & the early Greek & Latin fathers onwards affirm...a female apostle [Junia].” [Linda Belleville, “Re-examination of Rom. 16:7 in...Primary Source Materials,” *NT Studies*, Vol. 51, #2 p. 231]
  - b. Prophets Christian prophets are mentioned...in Acts (Acts 13:1). Their role involved edification & encouragement as they spoke things... revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes such prophecies foretold the future, as Agabus. Women also functioned as prophets; e.g. “Philip the evangelist...had 4...daughters who prophesied.” (Acts 21:8-9)
    - a. “Paul fully accepted the practice at least in Corinth of women leading in prayer & prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5, 10)...” [James D. G. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 588]
  - c. Evangelists “From the Greek word for the ‘gospel’ (*euangelion*), evangelists denotes people like Philip & Timothy who proclaimed the gospel (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). [ESV]
  - d. Shepherds (or ‘pastors’) & Teachers “In the NT, elders ‘shepherd’ [God’s ‘flock’] by watching over & nurturing the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). There’s...uncertainty...whether ‘shepherds & teachers’ refers...to 2 different ministry roles/functions, or whether the reference is to a single ‘shepherd-teacher’ ministry role...If ‘teachers’ are a separate group, they [are]...shepherds (overseers/elders) responsible for instruction in God’s Word [ESV]
- d. NT example—the Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1) Group of five ‘prophets & teachers’
  - a. “Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets & teachers: [1.] Barnabas, [2.] Simeon...called Niger, [3.] Lucius of Cyrene, [4.] Manaen, a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, & [5.] Saul [i.e. Paul].” (Acts 13:1)
  - b. “Prophets & teachers’ are always distinct offices in the NT church. Niger is Latin for ‘black’” indicating he likely came from Africa, as did the Cyrenean Lucius. (Cyrene was...in Libya, on the north coast of Africa.) ...Herod the tetrarch is Herod Antipas, who is mentioned frequently in the Gospels & who reigned in Galilee during Jesus’ ministry...” [ESV]
- e. The ‘one-man-band’ & ‘celebrity pastor/ministry leader’ models of ministry don’t match the NT
  - a. “In Eph. 4:11...there are several basic ministries...& they are distributed among several different people. [Often in our churches,] we have created a ‘one-man-band’ instead of a shared corporate ministry.” [Francis M. Bradley, “Extending the Work of Ministry,” *Living Church*, Vol. 179, p. 12]
  - b. In their book, *A Church Called Tov*, the father-daughter team, Scot McKnight & Laura Barringer argue that a celebrity culture around a pastor (like the one around [the leader of Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago, IL., US]) is the single most dangerous sign of a toxic culture within a church, followed by loyalty to an institution rather than to fellow congregants. To protect against these tendencies, the authors recommend congregations seek to nurture empathy, grace, truth-telling, justice, service, & imitation of Jesus...” [Publishers’ Weekly Book Review]
- f. Greater gift & responsibility comes with greater accountability (James 3:1)
  - a. “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; & from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.” (Lk. 12:48b) Note: “People who have been entrusted by God with many abilities & responsibilities will be held to a higher standard on the last day” [ESV]
  - b. “Not many of you should become teachers...you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (Ja. 3:1)
  - c. “Teachers were important in the early church (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:11)...However, with greater responsibility comes greater expectations by God (Lk. 12:48; Heb. 13:17), & teachers will be judged with greater strictness (lit., ‘greater judgment’), since they are accountable for more.” [ESV]

#### 4. Ministry (Eph. 4:11-12)

- a. Ministers exercise their ministries ‘to equip the saints for ministry (service)’ (Eph. 4:12a)
  - a. “These ministries do not constitute the whole of the Body’s ministry, but are intended for ‘equipment or making ready of the saints: for the work of ministry, for the building up of Christ’s body’ (Eph. 4:12; punctuation is important here ...). The ministry of the appointed few is to facilitate the ministry of all...So...all [can] come to the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:13)...” [James D. G. Dunn, *Ephesians*, in J. Muddiman (ed.) *Pauline Epistles*, p. 182]
- b. The saints do the work of ministry (service)
  - a. The “church leaders with various gifts (Eph. 4:11) are to equip the saints (all Christians) so that they [the saints] can do the work of ministry. All Christians have spiritual gifts that should be used in ministering to one another.” [ESV]

- b. “One of the most crippling ideas to pervade the church over the centuries is that there is a special class of Christians, called ‘clergy,’ who do the ministry, while the rest of the church sits back and lets them do it.” –Steven J. Cole
- c. The equipped saints serve to build up Christ’s body (Eph. 4:12b)
  - a. “Paul [gives] job descriptions for [church]...leadership: (1) to equip...saints to do the work of ministry [who in turn] build up [Christ’s] body; (2) to move the church toward unity & maturity (Eph. 4:12-14). Because all are gifted, every member of Christ’s body is [able] to serve, trained by the leadership. But, without competent leadership the church is not encouraged, unity is not maintained, & false doctrine[s]...assail...weaker members.” [E. R. Richards, Rediscovering Paul, p. 294]
- 5. Maturity—a Mature Church (Eph. 4:13)
  - a. “The result of the church’s unity & diversity is the church’s maturity.” [Tony Merida, Exalting Jesus in Eph., p. 101]
  - b. “Until we all arrive at...” (Eph. 4:13a)
    - a. “The focus is on corporate maturity. We are accustomed to thinking...in individual terms, but here the emphasis is on the Church.” [Peter Williamson, Ephesians, p. 121]
  - c. The unity of the faith & full knowledge (Eph. 4:13b)
    - a. “The ‘unity of the faith’ refers to the contents of what we believe, i.e., Christian doctrine, rather than a vague unity based on ‘having faith’ or being ‘persons of faith’.” [Peter Williamson, Ephesians, p. 120]
  - d. Maturity –“a full-grown person” (Eph. 4:13c)
  - e. With “a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Eph. 4:13d)