Clear About the Gospel Bible Study
BYF - Ephesians 4.1-16 - November 1, 2026
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TEACHING OUTLINE

1. Start with announcements and prayer. (5 minutes)

2. Read aloud Ephesians 4.1-16. (5 minutes)

3. Discuss the imperative to "lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God" in Ephesians 4.1-3. (10 minutes)

- Shift in emphasis from theology in chapters 1-3 to practice in chapters 4-6 (although shouldn't make too much of this shift; will find theology and practice interwoven throughout Ephesians)
- Paul writing the letter from prison: probably Rome (see house arrest in Acts 28); alternate view is in Ephesus itself
- Double use of "call" refers back to discussion of election in Eph 1.3-14: your calling is that you have been called out by God for salvation and service
- As a result, live with each other in Christian fellowship accordingly, with several indicators of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5.22-23) listed: humility, gentleness, patience, love, peace
- Living in this Spirit-empowered way expresses itself in the "unity of the Spirit" (ESV) or "united in the Spirit" (NLT)

4. Discuss the unity found in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" in Ephesians 4.4-6. (10 minutes)

- Emphasis upon unity continues in this section of shared, connected theology to shared, connected practice
- A lot of "ones" mentioned, emphasizing theological and practical unity found in Christ
- Eph 4.5-6's source probably from ancient creed or confession, with three-part structure: 1) body, Spirit, hope; 2) Lord, faith, baptism; 3) God and Father of all "who is over all, in all, and living through all" (Eph 4.6 NLT); note different typesetting format in most contemporary translations as befits something being quoted from different source
- Combination of all these "ones" emphasizes the new reality of following Jesus as Lord: there is only one gospel, and to believe this gospel is to enter into the theological and practical unity this gospel creates
- Unity emphasized here connects with Eph 2.11-22's teaching on unification of Jews and Gentiles into one people in Christ

5. Discuss how Christian communities receive grace and gifts "to build up the church, the body of Christ" in Ephesians 4.7-16. (15 minutes)

- Giving of gifts based on Christ's grace to us noted in Eph 4.7
- But then brief sidebar by Paul in Eph 4.8-10 to elaborate upon Jesus's ascending and prior descending to our world: description of the Incarnation and Ascension

- Returns to theme of grace-filled, grace-motivated gifts given to Christ's followers in Eph 4.11
- Not inclusive listing of all gifts (other, different gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians and Romans, for example), but ones that connect with Eph 4.12: "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (ESV) or "Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ" (NLT)
- Discuss what it means to "equip" followers of Jesus for their work of ministry and the church to be "built up"; ministry not just for clergy, is it?
- The four particular gifts that will help everyone to be equipped and built up:
    - Apostles: those authorized to lead and disseminate the gospel (some confusion over "capital A 'Apostle,'" like Peter and Paul, and "lower case a 'apostle,'" those continuing to this day to share the good news and plan for Christian expansion, especially in missionary contexts)
    - Prophets: less about future events; more about explaining, teaching God's Word
    - Evangelists: focused on sharing the gospel in large groups, small groups, and one on one
    - Pastors-Teachers: usually considered one combined gift; those who shepherd and guide local Christian communities with teaching/preaching and pastoral care (today's pastors)
- Intended result based on Eph 4.13-16? Congregations with strong, mature followers of Christ who are not misled by false teaching, who combine both truth and love in relationships, and who become more like Christ daily

6. Close with prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. As you read aloud Ephesians 4.1-16, what is the first thing that immediately grabs your attention? How so?
2. What clue shows up in Ephesians 4.1 that tells us Paul is shifting his focus from what he has been discussing in chapters 1-3 to a new concern starting in chapter 4? How does your reading of verses 2-16 confirm and elaborate upon this new direction?
3. Paul emphasizes particular characteristics in Ephesians 4.2-3. How might Galatians 5.22-23 help us better understand them? Where else in Scripture are these characteristics emphasized?
4. Ephesians 4.4-6 unpacks the theological and practical unity found in Christ. What key word gets repeated again and again to make this point clearly? Describe what this unity should look like in a congregation.
5. Which one of the "ones" mentioned in Ephesians 4.5-6 stands out to you as something we especially need to lift up and endorse today? Why?
6. Paul mentions four spiritual gifts in particular as having special importance. Why these four? If these four gifts are lived out and practiced in a congregation over a significant period of time, what will that congregation look like as a result?
7. Talk about the Holy Spirit as the source of all the spiritual gifts Christians receive. How does this keep us from being overly prideful or boastful about a gift we have been given?