

EPHESIANS

From the Gospel Story to Our Story

Structure

- **Chapters 1-3:** Doctrinal—describing how the church must understand its identity in view of the gospel as God's vision of cosmic unity in Christ
- **Chapter 4-6:** Ethical—exhorting the church to conduct itself in light of its calling within God's plan for peace and unity in Christ

Introduction

- The second half of Paul's letter to the Ephesians begins with the term "Therefore," signalling a major shift in emphasis
- Beginning in chapter 4, Paul starts to challenge his readers to respond to the gospel story by how they live their lives in this world
- Gospel story (1-3)✉ Our story (4-6)
- Key themes include: church life, a new humanity, the Spirit's influence, mutual submission, and spiritual warfare

The Life of the Church (4:1-16)

- In 4:1-16, Paul talks about the life of the church, which is a big family with different kinds of people
- He emphasizes on how believers are “one”:
- **4** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called; **5** **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; **6** **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (4:1-6)

The Life of the Church (4:1-16)

- Paul says unity is not the same as uniformity
- He explores how Jesus' new family consists of different kinds of people or roles:
- ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:11-13)

The Life of the Church (4:1-16)

- Believers in the church are all empowered by one “Spirit” with many gifts to love and serve one another, and to build up the church:
- ⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people” (4:7-8)

The Life of the Church (4:1-16)

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- ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (4:11-16)

A New Humanity (4:17-6:9)

- Paul challenges every Christian to take off their “old self” (v. 22, literally, a set of old clothes) and to put on their “new self” in which the image of God is being restored (v. 24; cf. 2:15):
- ²⁰That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your **old self**, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the **new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (4:20-24)

Old Self and New Self Compared (4:25-5:17)

Old Self

- Lies
- Anger
- Theft
- Gossip
- Revenge
- Promiscuity
- Drunk

New Self

- Speaks the truth
- Peace
- Generous
- Encourages
- Forgiveness
- Self-control
- Influenced by God's Spirit

Controlled by the Spirit of God (5:18-21)

- Paul spells out what a person who is controlled by the Spirit of God looks like:
- **¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (5:18-21)**
- That is, he or she sings together, is thankful for everything, and elevates others as more important than themselves

Mutual Submission (5:22-6:9)

- Paul then expands on the principle of mutual submission (v. 21) to Christian marriage:
- ²²Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
- ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant

Mutual Submission (5:22-6:9)

- The wife is to respect her husband and allow her husband to be responsible for her
- The husband is to love his wife and to use his responsibility to lay down his selfish agenda and to prioritize her well-being above his own
- This kind of marriage re-enacts the gospel story
- The husband imitates Jesus by his love and self-sacrifice
- The wife mimics the church, which allows Jesus to love her
- Paul applies the same principle to children and parents, as well as slaves and masters

The Reality of Spiritual Evil (6:10-24)

- Paul closes out the letter by reminding Christians of the reality of spiritual evil
- There are beings and forces that try to undermine the unity of God's people and to compromise their new humanity
- Paul challenges them to: ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes (6:10-11)
- These instructions are from Isa 11:5; 49:2; and 59:17 in how Isaiah depicts the messianic King
- As the Messiah's followers, we need to make the Messiah's attributes our own, as we make up Jesus' body

Discipleship Pointers

- Paul summarizes the gospel story and how it should reshape every part of our life story
- Christians can grow only if we are controlled and walk by the Spirit of God
- Practically, Paul encourages us to form habits, using prayer, Scripture reading, and our relationship with one another to help us grow and mature as followers of Jesus