

# EPHESIANS

## WEEK NINE

### • STUDY ONE •

#### BACKSTORY

The overall theme of Ephesians is the unity of the Church in Christ, through the power of the Spirit. Paul teaches that the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile was extinguished at Christ's sacrificial death, and no hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with Christ as the head. The new body, the Church, has been equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit to allow the members to live out their new lives and model Christ's example.

## SCRIPTURE

### **Ephesians 4:1-12 Christian Standard Bible (CSB)**

#### **Unity and Diversity in the Body of Christ**

<sup>4</sup>Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup>Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup>For it says:

When he ascended on high,  
he took the captives captive;  
he gave gifts to people.

<sup>9</sup>But what does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things. <sup>11</sup>And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

## DISCUSSION

When I think of unity I think of peace, togetherness, full agreement, and symbiosis. You may have just said to yourself...”symbi-what?” For those of you who don't know, Symbiosis is a term of Greek origin meaning ‘companion’ or ‘living together’. Webster's Dictionary defines ‘Mutual Symbiosis’ in this way: *the relationship between two different kinds of living things that live together and depend on each other. A mutually beneficial relationship.*

To paint a clearer picture, here are some examples.

Let's start with bees and flowers. The bee travels from flower to flower to collect nectar and satisfy its hunger from the pollen. While the bee is doing it's thing, some pollen dust attaches to the bee, which then gets carried to and transferred into . . .

the next flower. So, as the flower is providing nourishment to the bee, the bee is pollinating the flower and allowing the flower to reproduce. It is a win-win. How about the Zebra and the Oxpecker, a type of bird. The Oxpecker will sit on the Zebra and feed on ticks and parasites that live on the skin of the Zebra. In turn the Zebra is provided with great pest control. While the Oxpecker eats and does its thing, if it senses danger, it flies upward and screams a warning, hence alarming the Zebra so that it doesn't become a victim of prey. Another win-win.

You can find all sorts of examples of symbiosis if you look into nature, but before diving in a little deeper I wanted to look at one other relationship, The shepherd (God) and his sheep (us) a reference used quite a bit throughout scripture. Sheep lack a sense of direction and get lost easily so are dependent on the shepherd to be their guide, relying on his voice for guidance. Sheep are also defenseless creatures and are easily frightened. They have no speed, teeth or fierce growl so they rely on the protection and reassurance of the shepherd. Lastly, a sheep is unable to clean itself. It will remain dirty and unclean until the shepherd cleanses it of its filth. In turn, not only is the sheep a companion to the shepherd, but the wool of the sheep belongs to the shepherd as well to make blankets or clothing or to use it to sell or trade.

You see, the shepherd equips his sheep with everything the sheep needs to prosper while the sheep equips the shepherd the ability to live and prosper. They live together to benefit each other. The only difference between God and the shepherd in this scenario is that God chooses to use us for his benefit to further His kingdom, but he does not NEED us to fulfill it.

## REFLECTION

Each of us has a calling and a precious gift given to us by God. These gifts are purposeful in their own ways, uniquely formulated for you and you alone. We have each been given these gifts to help build up the body of Christ together in unity. We often get stuck in the grind of uncertainty and feel useless. That feeling of uselessness is a poor condition of the heart, most commonly known as pride and we are not called to stay there.

Pride comes in many different forms, quite possibly, in ways you have never recognized. Every single day we are put into situations, by God, in which we may feel overqualified for or too good for. PRIDE. Inadequate or not good enough. PRIDE. If you are finding yourself believing there is nothing better for you then ultimately you are believing you are too good to be used by God where you are. If you are finding. . .

. . . yourself believing you are worth more than what you are doing then you are also believing you are too good to be used by God. PRIDE.

**Romans 12:3-8 says this:**

**Many Gifts but One Body**

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. <sup>4</sup> Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

You see, your gift is not meant to look like anyone else's. No matter the size or how menial it may feel, it is necessary. You play a vital role, right where you are and God has already equipped you with everything you need. Without you being who you were created to be, someone else is missing out. Each of our gifts are purposeful on their own, but when they are knit together with the rest of the body of Christ we can accomplish so much more!

## QUESTIONS

Where are you feeling useless?

Where are you feeling you are worth more? Really, be honest.

Write out the impact it would have to those around if you didn't do even the small things so you can see how vital a role you play in the everyday life.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I praise you for being my shepherd. You are my guide, protector, and my reassurance. Thank you for equipping me for the work you have called me to do. Open my eyes and my heart to see and realize the gifts that you have blessed me with so that I can play my role where you have placed me to further your kingdom.

# EPHESIANS

WEEK NINE  
• STUDY TWO •

## BACKSTORY

The overall theme of Ephesians is the unity of the Church in Christ, through the power of the Spirit. Paul teaches that the misguided view that God accepts the Jew and rejects the Gentile was extinguished at Christ's sacrificial death, and no hindrance remains to reuniting all humanity as the people of God, with Christ as the head. The new body, the Church, has been equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit to allow the members to live out their new lives and model Christ's example.

By : Marcy Kolean

## SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:13-16

Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

<sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

## DISCUSSION

Since I was a kid I've always wanted to be a writer. I loved it so much that I would write on anything and everything! As I got older I had trouble coming up with ideas to write about. I wanted it to be amazing and nothing seemed good enough to me. When high school came around I heard about a creative writing class that was being offered. I was thrilled. Finally I could learn some creative ways to get my thoughts out and make them great. I showed up to class eager to learn and excited to get going. As assignments would come I would put all my energy and creativity in them only to get them back with red ink written all over it stating it wasn't good enough or it made no sense.

What!?! But How?!?! It's CREATIVE writing, how can you get that wrong?!?!

As the class went on my spirit for writing got crushed over and over and over again. Here I thought this would be a golden ticket for me into writing, and who knows, maybe a career of some sort. Turns out I was no good at it. Long story short, I have always felt a yearning to write, but never tried because I was convinced, because of my teachers opinion, that I was no good. It hurt and I let it destroy me and my spirit. Now that I am older I realize what I failed to see was that she was speaking the truth in a loving, helpful way to help me grow and become a better writer and ultimately a better person even though it didn't feel like that then. It was a very painful transformation.

## REFLECTION

Sometimes things that are said to us offend us and cause us to react in ways that are reckless. We assume that when someone says something we don't like it is because they don't like us and are trying to hurt us. The reality is, sometimes the truth hurts.

1 Corinthians 13:11 says this:

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things.

We are called to mature in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God so that when we hear things that may be hurtful or possibly untrue, we can hold it up to our wisdom in God and see if this meant to be hurtful or if it spoken to help, even when it doesn't feel like it.

## QUESTIONS

Remember a time when you were offended by something someone said or did. How did you react?

Remember a time when you offended someone, even if it was accidental. What was your motive?

OR

When was there a time you avoided telling someone the truth because you were afraid you would hurt their feelings? Which in the end hurt them more by not knowing the truth.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I praise you for being my teacher. Thank you for showing me new ways to grow personally and spiritually. Help me to see areas in my life where my emotions may have gotten in the way of the work that you meant for good. If there are any relationships that need repairing because I was mistaken on their intent please show me and open my heart and theirs for forgiveness and healing. When I speak, help me speak from a place of love and wisdom from you to unite with others in your kingdom.