

Ephesians 4-4-6

Oneness!!!

Ephesians 4:1–6 (ESV) — **1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Prayer for illumination: please join me in prayer...

Introduction:

There is a club for nearly everyone...

There is a special club for pilots who have had to activate their Martin Baker ejection seat in order to survive a plane crash. It is called the Martin Baker Ejection Tie Club. Martin Baker is the brand of the ejection seat. Everyone who is part of this club receives a special necktie, a patch, and a membership card to this 63-year-old organization. Currently the club boasts more than 6,000 registered members.

What is the basis for this club? Being saved by a Martin Baker ejection seat. These people are unified around ejection seats.

There is a club called “The British lawnmower racing association.” It was founded in 1973. Their website says, this past time has spread like crab grass. It has chapters in the USA, Germany, Luxemburg, Canada, New Zealand, and the Czech-republic. Their blog is called “the cutting edge.”

What is the basis for this club? Lawnmower racing. These people are unified around racing lawnmowers.

All clubs are unified on something...

Mazda Miata’s clubs are unified around Mazda Miata’s.

The “Sons of Norway” club is unified around Norwegian heritage.

The Spokane table tennis club is unified around table tennis.

The church of Jesus Christ is not a club, it is the body of Christ. But like clubs there is something that unites us. In other words, there is an objective basis for our unity.

What is the objective basis for our unity?

Is it the color of our skin? No

The age of the members? No

The political affiliation of our members? No

Is it the socio-economic status of our members? No

What is the basis for our unity? Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:4-6. **The basis for our unity is theological truth!!!** Let me say that again, the basis for our unity is theological truth!

Why does Paul bring this topic up here? Because he just exhorted the Ephesians in Eph 4:1-3 to aggressively pursue unity by walking in humility, patience, and gentleness.

At this point some of the Ephesians saints were probably thinking.... I get it Paul, but what is the basis for our unity? Why should we pursue unity? Or what is it that unites us? Paul tells us **that the basis for our unity is theological truth!**

Which truths?

In Ephesians 4:4-6 Paul lists seven truths. These are truths that unite all Christians. These truths are the basis for church unity.

Why seven? Seven is the number of spiritual unity or perfection in the Bible. Let's look at each one in detail.

First, there is one body

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV) — 4 There is one body...

The church of Jesus Christ is one body. In other texts, it is described more specifically as the one body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

When someone becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit unites that person to the body of Jesus Christ. Therefore, everyone united to Christ is a member of the one body of Christ.

Joining the church of Jesus Christ is not like joining the rotary club or an athletic club. When we become Christians something much more profound happens. We become members of the one body of Christ. This one body has many members.

Illustration:

Getting my finger sliced off in a lawnmower... the rest of my body was very upset...

Only my finger was sliced off, but my whole body was crying out!!! There is one body with many members. When one member suffers the whole body suffers. When one member rejoices the whole body rejoices. When one member has needs, the whole-body rallies.

What is the basis for our unity? First, there is one body!

Second, there is one spirit

Ephesians 4:4-6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit...

There is one Spirit, he is the Holy Spirit, the third member of the trinity. Why does Paul mention the Holy Spirit as the basis for unity?

Because every Christian, is a Christian, because of the work of the one Holy Spirit. Yes, we all come to Jesus Christ under different circumstances, but the Holy Spirit works the same way in all of us.

How does he work?

He effectually calls us
He convicts us of sin
He regenerates us

He gives us the gift of faith and repentance.
He baptizes us into the one body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:13)
He seals us for the day of redemption.
He sanctifies us.
He assures us.
He gives us gifts.
He guides us.
He will one day glorify us.

Illustration:

What do these two people have in common?

Rob grew up in Hillyard. He was abused as a child, thrown in prison when he was 19, and hooked on heroine most of his adult life. Yet God radically transformed him at the age of 47.

Sally grew up in a Christian home in Colbert Washington. She had loving parents, at the age of 9 she professed faith in Christ and has never looked back. Now she is the mother of four Godly children.

What do these two people have in common? Apparently, nothing... until you look below the surface. They are both sinners who have been regenerated and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

The one spirit is the basis for unity!

What is the basis for our unity? There is one body and one Spirit...

Third, there is one hope

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

What is our hope? The Christians hope is that Jesus Christ will return some day and restore all things. He will wipe away every tear. He will make all things new. He will execute perfect Justice. In our culture, hope is wishful thinking, but in the Bible, hope is certainty.

All Christians have the same hope. All Christians are going to the same place, we are all traveling on the same road, we are all going in the same direction. Where are we all going? To glory!!!

This shared hope is the basis for our unity.

Notice what Paul does not say....

Our shared hope is not in a political party.
Our shared hope is not having the right supreme court justices.
Our shared hope is not in the constitution of the United States.
Our shared hope is not in our wealth, health, or freedom.

Our shared hope is known as the blessed hope. We place our hope in the return of Jesus Christ.

What is the basis for our unity? There is one body, one Spirit, one Hope...

Fourth, there is one lord

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord,...

The phrase “one Lord” (capitalized) is clearly a reference to the one Lord Jesus Christ. The title Lord pointed to the deity of Jesus Christ.

All Christians are saved by the one Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way to be saved.

1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV) — 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Acts 4:12 (ESV) — 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus Christ is the only way to God, there is no other way. If you are not a Christian, you must turn away from your sins and trust Jesus. He is the only way.

If you are a Christian, you are saved by the one Lord Jesus Christ. And so is everyone else in the church of Jesus Christ. Since all Christians are saved the same way, they must work hard to get along.

We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus!!! He is the one who saves.

Illustration:

One pastor used to imagine a conversation that might have taken place between the two blind men healed by Jesus. One was healed in John 9 and the other was healed in Mark 8.

In John 9 Jesus healed the man by spitting in mud and rubbing the mud in the man’s eyes. But in Mark 8 Jesus simply healed the man by speaking the words.

Imagine for a moment that the two men met many years later and swapped stories. The man from Mark 8 told his story first. The man from John 9 listened carefully. He eventually interrupted and said, “wait a minute, you left out the part about Jesus placing the mud in your eyes.” The man from Mark 8 said, “but Jesus did not place mud in my eyes.” The man from John 9 said, “He must have, you probably just forgot that part, that is how he healed me. I’m beginning to doubt that you were even healed. I bet you have always been able to see.” The first man really dug in his heels. The second man refused to back down from his story.

As a result, two denominations formed. The first was called the “Mudites” the second was called the “Anti- Mudites.”

Ok... this is a fictional story. But it is not that far-fetched. Denominations have formed over lesser things. Why? People take their eyes off of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Application:

Our unity is based on our relationship to the one Lord. In other words, our unity is based on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Churches must major on the gospel. We must rally around the gospel. The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is the gospel.

The gospel is the only hope for salvation.
The gospel is the only hope for restoring broken marriages.
The gospel is the only hope for ending painful addictions.
The gospel is the only hope for destroying besetting sins.
The gospel is the only hope for overcoming crippling fear.

The gospel is our only hope for unity.

When the gospel is the main thing, almost everything else in the church takes care of itself. Why? The gospel makes people humble, patient, and gentle.

We must stay focused on the one and only Lord!

What is the basis for our unity? There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one lord...

Fifth, there is one faith

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith,...

Most scholars agree that Paul is talking about objective faith not subjective faith. Subjective faith is what we do. We believe something. Objective faith, on the other hand, refers to the content of our faith or what we believe. Some refer to this as “the faith.”

Jude 3 (ESV) — 3b ... I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

“The faith” is the body of basic doctrine taught and guarded by the apostles. All Christians agree on the basics of “the faith.”

What are the key doctrines that make up “the faith” that was once for all delivered to the saints? Here is a short list.

The trinity
The doctrine of sin
The virgin birth of Christ
The deity of Christ
The substitutionary death of Christ.
The resurrection of Christ.
Salvation by grace through faith
The reality of heaven and hell

This is the one faith.

Application:

The body of doctrine known as “the faith,” is what all Christians must believe. That is not to say that other doctrines are not important. Everyone who agrees on these doctrines is on the same team.

Show chart with three concentric circles.

Bottom line... our unity is based on doctrine. It is based on objective truth.

Some things are worth fighting for (center circle) and others are not (outer circle). We want to focus on the plain things in the center circle.

Why? Because the plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things!!!

We also need to recognize what our unity is not based on. Our unity is not based on...

Skin color

Political parties

Economic incomes

Season of life

Ethnicity (Korean churches, Chinese churches, etc...)

Forms of education...

A particular philosophy of ministry...

I get nervous about cowboy churches and biker churches. If our unity is based on anything other than theological truth, we are in trouble.

What is the basis for our unity? There is One body, one spirit, one hope, one lord, one faith...

Sixth, there is one baptism

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism,...

Is Paul talking about baptism in water or baptism in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13)?

In one sense it does not really matter because those two things are supposed to happen around the same time. We are supposed to be baptized right after we are converted.

All Christians are supposed to be baptized. Baptism is a glorious picture of our sins being washed away. It is a glorious picture of the Christian dying and then rising to new life in Christ. It is a glorious picture of entering into the new covenant community.

All Christians, share in one baptism. This is our basis for our unity.

What is the basis for our unity? There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one lord, one faith, one baptism...

Seventh, there is one God and father

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV) — 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul often emphasizes God as Father (Eph. 1:3, 17; 2:18; 3:14; 5:20). The beautiful oneness of believers is based in the fact that God is the father of all believers.

We have gone from wayward sinners, orphans, and objects of God's wrath, to adopted, justified, sons and daughters of God. God does not just forgive us he makes us his children.

Because God has adopted all Christians, they all have the same father. This is a basis for unity.

Illustration:

My young brother (named Joseph) and I are very different.

He is an avid rock climber.... I'm a tennis player...

He has a brilliant math and science mind... I got as far as precalculus, then I quit math forever.

He has three daughters... I have five sons...

He is a computer engineer.... I'm a pastor...

When he was a kid, he loved science and reading.... I loved sports...

He is a great runner... I would rather pound my hand with a hammer than run....

He likes to hike and camp... I love hotels and tennis clubs...

But despite our great differences we have the same father, we are brothers, and we have a deep, undying love for each other. We are, after all is said and done, family. And so it is with those of us who are brothers and sisters in Christ. After all is said and done, we have the same Father — we are family.

Because we have one father, we must fight for unity in the church of Jesus Christ...

Let me summarize...

Paul is providing a theological basis for unity in the church in Ephesus. Their unity is based on objective theological truth. Which objective truths? Paul lists seven.

There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father over all.

What does this mean for us practically???

Let's look at the overall context again...

Ephesians 4:1–6 (ESV) — **1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul urges the Ephesian Christians to eagerly maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond peace. This is the command...

The Greek verb for eager is very strong. It means that we are to “spare no effort.” Like I said last week, it was used to describe the strenuous effort involved in taking a very long journey. This eagerness must involve every fiber of our being.

How eager are you to preserve unity???

We must eagerly pursue unity. How? By walking in humility, gentleness, and patience. This was last week's sermon.

But why should we pursue unity? Because we are united by at least seven theological truths.

Let me get really practical...

You may disagree with someone in this church on the appropriate response to COVID-19...
You may disagree with someone in this church about politics.
You may disagree with someone in this church on how to respond to race.
You may disagree with someone in this church on the millennium, Israel, or spiritual gifts....
You may disagree with someone on what songs to sing or how to sing them...
Someone in your small group may really annoy you...

Yet... yet... yet... you must fight for unity in this church since you all affirm the same key theological truths.

Our unity is based on objective theological truths.

These theological truths are far more important than our preferences over secondary matters!!!

If we are fighting with each other on secondary issues, we are functionally saying that our petty differences are more important than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be guilty of saying that!!!

Let's fight for unity together!!!

Conclusion:

There is a club called the caterpillar club. It is for people whose lives have been saved by parachuting out of a plane safely to the ground. Why is it called the caterpillar club? Because parachutes used to be made of silk. After caterpillars create silky cocoons, they emerge from their cocoons and take flight. This club is estimated to have 100,000 thousand people in it, including former president George H. Bush.

What is the basis for this club? Being saved by a parachute.

The church of Jesus Christ is not a club, it is the body of Christ. But like clubs there is something that unites us. In other words, there is an objective basis for our unity.

What is the objective basis for our unity? Objective theological truths, starting with the truth that we have all been saved by Jesus Christ. Let's pray...