MADE

The Book of Ephesians





The Book of Ephesians

WEEK 9JUNE 3, 2024



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EVERY DAY ...

- ... A **PASSAGE** TO READ,
- ... SOME **COMMENTS** TO CONSIDER,
- ... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,
- ... A **PRAYER** TO PRAY.



WEEK 9

EPHESIANS 4:11-14

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First read Ephesians 4:11.

Jesus could've done anything he wanted—without any help. He's self-sufficient. He's all-powerful. He can "fill all things" on his own (v.10). And yet, he chooses to distribute abilities and responsibilities to people for the sake of doing his will. That means while our gifts are for us, they're not about us. Gifts tell us about the giver.

- An apostle is sent by God to define and spread the gospel (see Galatians 1:1,11-12). But Jesus is the truly sent one who brings "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10).
- A *prophet* speaks to God on behalf of the people and to the people on behalf of God (see Deuteronomy 18:22). However, God has now and ultimately "spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:2).
- An evangelist winsomely articulates the reasonableness of our faith (see Acts 17:17). Jesus is the picture of winsomeness, ministering to the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, and those with social power and those without.
- A *shepherd* cares for the needs of their community, not under compulsion but joyfully (see 1 Peter 5:2). Jesus is "the good shepherd" who joyfully laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).
- A *teacher* helps people know and obey God's will. As the Incarnate Word, Jesus perfectly embodied the truth and beauty of his Father and empowered us to do the same (see Matthew 28:20).

Each gift tells us something about the giver. They reflect Jesus' nature, character, and power. Therefore, every gift should be leveraged for his glory and purposes—building up the Church and advancing his kingdom.



- 1. How have you experienced the nature, character, and power of Jesus through the giftedness of others?
- 2. Why is it tempting to think our gifts are about us?
- 3. How does Jesus free us from things like greed, ambition, and self-centeredness so we can use our gifts for his glory and purposes?

Thank you for giving men and women gifts to build up the Church and advance your kingdom. Help me see your Son through their giftedness and understand how you've empowered me for your purposes, too.



First read Ephesians 4:12.

One of the odd things about the Old Testament is its detailed instructions for things like the Tabernacle (see Exodus 25-31). Have you ever noticed? We're talking pages and pages about specific materials, sizes, weights, and processes. Honestly, it can be pretty dull to read. And yet, one writer comments, "The Israelites are never happier than they are when building the Tabernacle" (Second Mountain, 287). Why is that?

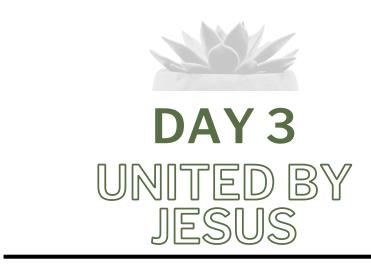
Well, there's something about a group of people having a common project, *isn't there?* It calls out the dignity of our diverse gifts. It brings meaning and reshapes society. A common project is what makes us a people. "To turn a group of individuals into a covenantal nation," explains Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "they must build something together" (*The Home We Built Together*, 137).

In many ways, the Church is our common project. While our status as God's people is established and secured through Jesus, we're supposed to "grow up in every way" (v.15). Professor William Klien says spiritual formation is the practice of becoming who we are. We are the Church. Yet, by God's grace, we're becoming the Church. We become by using our various gifts and calling for the good of those around us. Jesus calls different people with different gifts to do the same thing: "to equip the saints... for building up the body of Christ" (v.12). While this isn't an exhaustive list, Paul gives us a good picture of how our various abilities are meant to follow his detailed instructions together as we become the Church.



- 1. Why do you think God wants us to use our gifts to help each other grow?
- 2. What fears or discomforts do you have using your gifts to serve or let others serve you?
- 3. How does Jesus first serve and empower us to equip and build up one another without fear?

Comfort me in my anxieties and uncertainties about using my gifts and being served by other's gifts. Help me to sense your love and power through the mutual work of my brothers and sisters.

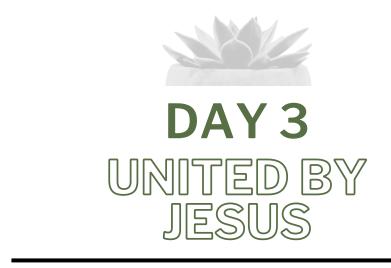


First read Ephesians 4:13a.

Unity is a common social vision. When we talk about social unity, we usually have in mind our shared values. Despite our differences, we're encouraged to focus on what we share. Broadly, things like love, kindness, and family are generally accepted values that promote the unity of diverse people. For instance, we may disagree about which politician will bring economic flourishing. However, we may still share the value of public education. And so, we unite in the common bond of our children's school community—perhaps setting aside our political differences. But are we really united if we have to disregard something we care about deeply in order to be together? Doesn't this ultimately create more division? Finding people who share parts of our story or identity seems to leave a lot of what it means to be us untended.

Modern society's version of unity creates a disintegrated self. Integrity comes when we "all attain unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God" (v.13a). In other words, unity isn't achieved by rallying around our shared values and downplaying our differences. Unity comes from mutual transformation. Like in marriage, oneness is produced by self-giving, not compromise. When we find our place in a larger story of faith and build our lives on the identity of Jesus, our values change. Through the mercy of Christ, we're given "a new heart, and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 36:26).

You see, we aren't united by our shared values (and ignoring our differences). We're united by sharing in Christ's suffering and resurrection (see Romans 6:5). In him, we become something brand new together.



- 1. How does the harmony of the Trinity give us a vision for unity within the Church?
- 2. How has a common faith and savior changed what you value?
- 3. What does Jesus value most? Do you value what he values?

Teach my soul to ache for justice where you see inequality. Bring me joy through what brings you glory. Cause me sorrow by what causes you to weep. Make my heart, soul, mind, and body like your Son's.



First read Ephesians 4:13b.

Maturity is often measured by independence. Physical maturity is about learning to eat and walk on your own. Vocational maturity is about taking responsibility for yourself. Financial maturity is about paying your own bills. However, the measurement is much different when it comes to our spiritual life. In fact, it's the exact opposite.

Paul explains that our common project, various gifts, and unity are all meant to grow us up in Jesus (see vv.11-13a). We're meant to become mature "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v.13b). We're not meant to become a more authentic and autonomous version of ourselves. Moral maturity is about becoming more like Jesus by abiding in him (see John 15:4). What's more, we can't do this in isolation. "This destination to which all believers are headed," notes Peter O'Brien, "is understood as a corporate entity" (The Letter to the Ephesians, 307). Maturing spiritually is about becoming like someone else (Christ) with everyone else (the Church). You see, while every other form of maturity may be measured by independence, moral maturity is measured by dependency.

This can be unsettling. After all, most of us navigate a world that teaches us to establish our self-concept through discovery and expression. Our true self is on the inside and must be let out. However, the Bible teaches us that what's on the inside needs to be redeemed, not released (see Romans 12:1-2). Discerning this difference requires an ever-increasing reliance upon the Lord, his Word, his Spirit and his people.



- 1. Why is God worthy of our complete dependency?
- 2. What fears do you have about becoming more dependent on God or his people? How might Jesus meet you in those fears?
- 3. How did Jesus demonstrate dependency during his time on earth?

Help me to rely on you more and on me less.



First read Ephesians 4:14.

Contentment is a mark of moral maturity. Conversely, being "tossed to and fro by the waves and ... wind" is the habit of a child (v.14a). Without the stability of Christ, it's easy for us to be knocked off course "by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (v.14c). In Ephesus, Paul was concerned with an overt misappropriation of gospel teaching. In our day, we're prone to be "carried about" by less obvious measures—like the news, fashion trends, social media fads, and the stock market (v.14b). In either case, Christians are meant to build their lives on the sure foundation of Christ and his kingdom (see Matthew 7:24-27).

In a conversation with organizational psychologist Adam Grant, writer Anne Lamott described maturity as learning to define joy as peace rather than excitement (*Re:Thinking Podcast*, April 15, 2024). In our spiritual infancy, we're easily distracted by whatever promises to keep things fresh. But somewhere along the way, we realize what we're really looking for is wholeness, or what the Jewish people call *Shalom*.

Excitement doesn't produce peace because, like the waves and wind, it changes. What thrills us today will bore us (or even harm us) tomorrow. Our souls can only be settled by something that's settled, something that's secure; someone who already embodies *Shalom*.

Jesus alone holds us fast in the chaos of our modern world because through the cunning and schemes of the evil one, he remained perfectly content (see Matthew 4:1-11).



- 1. How does God's faithfulness encourage contentment?
- 2. What tends to toss your emotions, thoughts, and hope "to and fro"?
- 3. What do you need to remember about Jesus today in order to settle your soul?

Settle my soul.



DAY 1

Ephesians 4:12

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

It's hard to be together.

What does it mean to be the Body of Christ? Why is it hard to be Christians sometimes?

DAY 2

Ephesians 4:13

to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

It's hard to become like Jesus.

What does it mean to become like Jesus? Why is that hard? Who can help us?

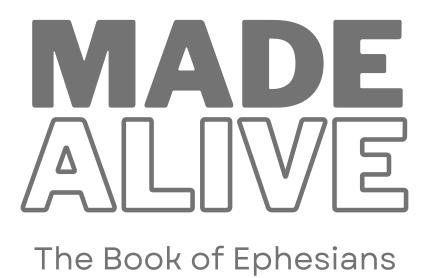
DAY 3

Ephesians 4:14

... so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

It's hard to trust God.

What makes you doubt God? How does Jesus help us trust God?



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