

# Session 3:

## We Support One Another

QUESTION 1:

*When has being part of a group helped you accomplish something big?*



## THE POINT

God gives the church  
spiritual gifts to accomplish  
His work.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

The English poet John Donne wrote, “No man is an island entire of itself.” An interconnectedness exists between us all. No one survives and thrives without assistance from others, not even in the church. However, when we examine the behaviors and attitudes of most Americans, it looks like a sea of islands.

Western culture in the twenty-first century surely stands out as the most radically individualistic culture in human history. It seems like every person makes every decision with one thing and one thing alone in mind: *What’s best for me (or for my family)?* Too often we give little consideration to how our lives and choices impact other people.

When we come to Christ, we don’t come to Him alone; we are joined with other believers in His church. Our individual lives and relationship with Christ are not just about “me”; they are about “we.” We must leave individualism at the door when joining Christ’s church. Why? Because God saves us not only for our own benefit, but also to bless and support others—especially fellow Christians.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## EPHESIANS 4:1-7

<sup>1</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.

Though many of us have an individualist mindset, the Bible teaches that believers share a great responsibility for one another. Paul began in verse 1 by urging us “to live worthy of the calling you have received.” Then in verses 2-6, he explained what that life looks like. So how can we break from an individualist mindset and think of others?

The answer is found in God's grace. “Grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.” At salvation, Jesus saved us by His grace to unite us with God, and He continues to give us grace to unite us with His people. As we depend on God, His Holy Spirit works through us to support other believers. And the Holy Spirit works through other believers to help and support us.

As we depend upon the Spirit of God and exercise the gifts God gives to us, our goal is to maintain unity in the church. We are to make “every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Paul didn't tell us to create unity; we are to “keep the unity.” We are to maintain the unity that Jesus has already bought, in at least two different ways:

**1. God empowers us to pursue relational unity.** In humility, we should consider others in addition to ourselves. With gentleness, we should give others the benefit of the doubt.

Through patience, we should show others the mercy we've been shown from Jesus. And in love, we should forgive the faults of others, knowing we have plenty of our own.

**2. God empowers us to profess doctrinal unity.** The city of Ephesus in the first century was home to Jews, Gentiles, and even polytheists. Much like today, people were all over the spiritual map. But in verses 4-6, Paul summed up some of the most unifying major doctrines of the Christian faith.

### QUESTION 2:

***How should we understand Paul's emphasis of “one” in these verses?***

There is *one* God in three Persons. There is *one* Savior of our faith. There is *one* spiritual baptism by which we're saved. There is *one* spiritual body of Christ—the church. Christians may disagree on minor doctrines and issues, but Paul's words remind us that believers have far more to unite us doctrinally than divide us. The very core of our faith unites us.

## EPHESIANS 4:11-13

<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, <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.

At conversion, God gives each believer a measure of grace that comes in the form of spiritual gifts. But He has especially gifted some people to lead the church for ministry.

The leaders God has given the church are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Some of these leaders hold more authority than others—especially the apostles and prophets. The apostles included Paul and the Twelve who walked closely with Jesus—all of whom Jesus personally called and sent out.

Evangelists, pastors, and teachers also build up the body of Christ through their varying gifts. They proclaim the Word of God to us and explain what it means to live for Christ.

Without these gifted leaders to Christ's church, none of us would be able to grow and become spiritually mature. Based on this passage, God gives these leaders to His church for at least four specific purposes:

1. To equip the saints for the work of the ministry
2. To build up the body of Christ
3. To lead the body to unity around the truth of Jesus
4. To lead the body to look like Jesus

I don't know what all people expect of their pastors, but I'm fairly certain many people in America would not say what Paul wrote in

verses 12-13. In many churches, people wrongly assume that pastors exist to do all the work of the ministry. They view Sunday mornings as a product to consume. Ministers produce; the people consume. It's what they're paid to do, right? Not exactly. The primary role in a church leader's ministry is to equip the rest of us for ministry and to help us grow in Christlikeness.

No one comes out of the womb a ready-made worker in God's kingdom. No one is fully equipped to serve at the moment he trusts in Jesus. But when we come to faith in Christ, God gifts us in a specific way, and He uses the spiritual leaders He's placed in our lives to equip us to use those gifts.

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### QUESTION 3:

***What are some ways you have been equipped by the church?***

The heart of the church's ministry is done by each one of us—not just those with official leadership titles. Each one of us has a responsibility to serve in the church's ministry. Our gifts may be different, our time commitments may vary, and limitations may arise, but our responsibility to serve is the same. In Christ's church, every saint has a part in supporting the body.

## ONE AND SOME

*Ephesians 4:1-13 uses the words “one” and “some” quite a bit.  
Draw a line from the left for those things Paul said there was only “one” of,  
and a line from the right for those things there are “some” of.*

**ONE**

**SOME**

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| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Lord</b> <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> |
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| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> <b>hope</b> <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/> |
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| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> <b>God</b> <input type="radio"/>        | <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> <b>teacher</b> <input type="radio"/>    | <input type="radio"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Father</b> <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/> |

## EPHESIANS 4:14-16

<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.

God gives every believer His grace in the form of spiritual gifts. These gifts include abilities and qualities empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some believers are gifted to serve in leadership roles, for example. Others are gifted to demonstrate greater acts of mercy, service, and generosity. While still others have a greater inner sense of faith, wisdom, and discernment. Regardless of the specific gift(s) we possess, God has given all spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ.

Every believer's spiritual gift in every local church is important to the growth, unity, and maturity of the body of Christ—including yours! Embrace the role God gives you, and use it for the good of the body, because the body grows and is "building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part."

the point of verse 16: When we each contribute our gifts, the body is built up in love.

As we serve the body with our gifts, we are to speak "the truth in love." God's Word is the source of truth, so speaking the truth to one another in love means all our ministry activity is to be united around Scripture. We're not to serve "on our own," with our own ideas about what Jesus wants us to do. What we say and do is to be grounded in and based on God's Word.

When Scripture is not central, the church wavers like chaff in the wind. On our own, we're like little children, but when we remain focused on God's Word, we grow as mature adults. On our own, divisions fester; with the Word, unity grows. Left to ourselves, the church looks like the world; but with the Word, the church looks like Jesus. Under the direction of His Word and the power of His Holy Spirit, we in the body of Christ work together to accomplish His work.

### QUESTION 4:

***What are some obstacles that prevent us from supporting each other as Paul described in these verses?***

Allowing the Holy Spirit to use your gifts is not only the primary way you serve the body, but it is also a tangible way you love the body. That's

### QUESTION 5:

***What steps can we take as a group to accomplish God's work within this church?***



“SPIRITUAL GIFTS

ARE A NECESSITY IN THE MINISTRY OF EVERY BODY OF BELIEVERS.”

*Kay Arthur, David Lawson, B.J. Lawson*

# LIVE IT OUT

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How will you live out the truth that God has given you spiritual gifts for His service?

▶ **Reflect on the truth.** Consider the contrast between some of the cultural expectations of church and the biblical expectations studied in this session. Confess and turn from any misconceptions about life in the church. Ask God to unite your heart with His regarding His church.

▶ **Discover your gift(s).** If you're not sure what your spiritual gift is or how you can be of service in the church, ask other believers to help you. Many times, people see our strengths before we do. Discuss with a church leader your desire to serve.

▶ **Use your gift to serve.** If you've identified your spiritual gifts, look for opportunities to exercise them in your life and in your church. Invest your time, passions, and strengths in building up others in the church.

Many people approach church for how it benefits them alone, but the biblical approach is to consider how we might benefit one another. **Let's use our spiritual gifts to grow, unify, and love Christ's church.**