

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

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.

Ephesians 4:1-6 (HCSB)

Unity and Diversity in the Body of Christ

4 Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting^[a] one another in love, ³ diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope^[b] at your calling— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹
Ephesians 4:1-6

4:1 This exhortation serves as a major transition in the letter as it moves from the church's belief statement to the church's mission statement. Paul insisted that a believer's behavior must be worthy of their divine calling.

4:3-6 Believers have the responsibility to keep unity in the body of Christ. The seven "ones" enumerated in these verses constitute the foundation on which the Trinitarian God creates a oneness in the church. Paul's plan can be seen from the vantage point of the work of the one Spirit creating one body, the one Lord Jesus Christ creating one hope, faith, and baptism, and the one God the Father bringing about one people of God.

4:6 One God and Father of all reminds believers that God's oneness defines the church's oneness.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 4".

English Standard Version - Study Bible²

Ephesians 4:1-6

4:1-16 *Unity of the Body of Christ.* Paul now turns to exhortation (with three subsections in [vv. 1-6](#), [7-10](#), and [11-16](#)) based upon the truths he has been teaching—a common format for his letters, in which doctrinal truths are stated first (here, [chs. 1-3](#)), then application to life is built on that doctrine ([chs. 4-6](#)). The exhortations of Scripture become empty moralism without this gospel foundation.

4:1-6 *Exhortation to Unity.* Paul exhorts the church to unity based on the truths of the one God and his one work of salvation.

4:1 **prisoner.** Paul's imprisonment for the sake of the gospel is **for the Lord** (see [3:1](#)). His exhortations have great power, since he himself has taken these matters seriously enough to suffer confinement in the Lord's service. Christians are to live **in a manner worthy** of the adoption, holiness, and unity to which they were **called** (see [1:4-5](#); [4:4](#)).

4:2 **Humility** was regarded as distasteful by the pagan world of Paul's day. Pride was more highly prized. All of the virtues mentioned—humility, **gentleness**, **patience**, and most of all, **love**—were displayed in Christ's own character and are to be evident in the daily walk of every Christian.

4:3 **Peace** is a state of reconciliation and love and therefore acts as a **bond** to unite believers in Christ. Believers do not create **unity** but are to preserve the unity already established.

4:4 **Spirit.** Just as a human body has one spirit that animates it, so Christ's body, the church, is enlivened by one Holy Spirit who enlivens Christians to eternal life. **one hope.** Christians do not have separate "hopes" but are together called to eternal life and to enjoy God forever in resurrection glory. They are also called to express that unity this side of eternity. On the church as a **body**, see [Rom. 12:4-8](#); [1 Cor. 12:12-31](#).

4:5 **One Lord** refers to Jesus Christ. **One faith** refers to the doctrinal truths Christians commonly confess. "One Spirit" ([v. 4](#)), "one Lord [Christ]" ([v. 5](#)), and "one God and Father" ([v. 6](#)) constitute a Trinitarian formula. **one baptism.** Christians have disagreed about the proper mode of baptism beginning in the early history of the church. "One baptism" here, however, may refer to the baptism of all believers into one body (as described in [1 Cor. 12:13](#)), which is the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit when one becomes a genuine believer in Christ. If this view is correct, water baptism would be an outward sign of the inward reality of the believer being in Christ as the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (cf. [John 3:5, 8](#); [Titus 3:5](#)). There is therefore a profound spiritual unity of all genuine believers who are "in Christ" (see [John 17:21, 23](#)), founded on "one faith" in "one Lord," irrespective of denominational differences. Others hold that the reference here is to water baptism, but would disagree concerning the proper mode.

4:6 **over all... through all... in all.** God is omnipresent (see [Ps. 139:7-12](#); [Isa. 66:1](#)). Thus the Christian church is "one body" ([Eph. 4:4](#)), wherever its separate congregations may be found throughout the world (see [Rom. 3:30](#)).

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 4".

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

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4:1, 2 God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. In light of this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own. This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? How well are you doing as his representative?

4:1-6 "There is one body," says Paul. Unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Often differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church. Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* future, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God! Have you learned to appreciate people who are different from you? Can you see how their differing gifts and viewpoints can help the church as it does God's work? Learn to enjoy the way we members of Christ's body complement one another. (See [1 Corinthians 12:12, 13](#) for more on this thought.)

4:2 No one is ever going to be perfect here on earth, so we must accept and love other Christians in spite of their faults. When we see faults in fellow believers, we should be patient and gentle. Is there someone whose actions or personality really annoys you? Rather than dwelling on that person's weaknesses or looking for faults, pray for him or her. Then do even more—spend time together and see if you can learn to like him or her.

The Oneness of All Believers	
<i>Believers are one in</i>	<i>Our unity is experienced in</i>
Body	The fellowship of believers—the church
Spirit	The Holy Spirit who activates the fellowship
Hope	That glorious future to which we are all called
Lord	Christ, to whom we all belong
Faith	Our singular commitment to Christ
Baptism	Baptism—the sign of entry into the church
God	God, who is our Father who keeps us for eternity

Too often believers are separated because of minor differences in doctrine. But Paul here shows those areas where Christians must agree to attain true unity. When believers have this unity of spirit, petty differences should never be allowed to dissolve that unity.

4:3 To build unity is one of the Holy Spirit's important roles. He leads, but we have to be willing to be led and to do our part to keep the peace. We do that by focusing on God, not on ourselves. For more about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does, see the notes on [John 3:6](#); [Acts 1:5](#); and [Ephesians 1:13, 14](#).

4:4-7 All believers in Christ belong to one body; all are united under one head, Christ himself (see [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)). Each believer has God-given abilities that can strengthen the whole body. Your special ability may seem small or large, but it is yours to use in God's service. Ask God to use your unique gifts to contribute to the strength and health of the body of believers.

4:6 God is "over all"—this shows his overruling care (transcendence). He is "in all" and "living through all"—this shows his active presence in the world and in the lives of believers (immanence). Any view of God that violates either his transcendence or his immanence does not paint a true picture of God.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2004-2005.

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

A Principle to Live By Ephesians #8: Walking Worthy

from [Ephesians 4:1-6](#)

**When we truly understand what God has done for all of us in Jesus Christ,
we should respond by living godly lives in love and unity.**

Paul once again reminded these New Testament believers to consider their position in Christ, as described in his introduction. God had chosen them for a tremendous blessing ([1:3-4](#)). This indeed was and is a calling that no one deserves, a wonderful manifestation of God's grace ([2:5,8](#)).

Paul quickly added that God “chose us in Him [Christ] . . . to be holy and blameless in His sight” ([1:4](#))—a great truth that has two perspectives. When we become believers, God sees us as perfect because of “redemption” and “forgiveness” through Christ's blood ([1:7](#)). However, as we learn more and more about God's grace and mercy and our eternal hope, we are to respond to God's sacrificial love by offering our “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God” ([Rm 12:1](#)). This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “walk worthy of the calling you have received” ([Eph 4:1](#)). We are indeed “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them” ([2:10](#)). Here Paul used the same metaphorical word **peripateo** when he exhorted believers to “walk worthy” of this wonderful “calling” in Christ ([4:1](#)). (See Dt #8: Walking Worthy, [p. 229](#).)

At this juncture, we also see why Paul prayed early on, especially for the Gentile believers, that they “may know what is the hope of His calling” ([1:18](#)). Because of elitism and prejudice, the Jewish believers in these Asian churches evidently considered that their hope in Christ was more significant than that of Gentile believers. After all, they had received “the covenants of the promise” centuries before, when the Gentiles were living “without hope and without God in the world” ([2:12](#)).

To walk worthy of our calling, we must remember that there is only “one hope” ([4:4](#)) for Jew and Gentile believers. In the church of Jesus Christ, there is only “one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” ([vv. 4-6](#)).

Reflection and Response

How do we see this principle of love and unity violated in some churches today?

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1629.