

Membership Covenant

The 5 G's
Groups
Giving
Gifts
Grace
Growth

A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: Ephesians 4:1-16

Message for the Week: From Prison with Love

Sunday, January 28

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Have you ever been treated with humility, gentleness, and patience (Ephesians 4:2) and then thought, "Wow! That really felt great." Or have you ever treated someone else with humility (serving them), patience (giving them as much time as necessary), and with gentleness (kindness) and watched them respond with exuberant joy? How do you think they felt? How did that make you feel? Did you give glory to God?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Ephesians 4:1-16](#) out loud.

[Clicking the link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

What does Paul mean when he says, “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (verse 1)? What does that look like? What gets in the way of God’s call on your life?

Where did following Jesus take Paul? Are you ready to follow Jesus, like Paul did, to prison? Does following Jesus take you to places or situations that you would otherwise not want to go? Does following Jesus ask you to give up things you would like to hang on to? Should it?

Since Jesus gave spiritual gifts in accordance with God’s will and plan, how should we view ourselves in comparison with others, and how much respect should we give to others when they are able to do something better than we might be able to do that same thing?

Can you identify the portion of grace that has been given to you? What is the purpose? (see verse 11, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

What do verses 15 & 16 have to do with verses 2 & 3?

Try It:

Try being “completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” with one person this week.

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that equips me to live here in this time and place. Give me the courage and grace to daily live out my faith so that I can encourage those I know and so that those I don’t know meet Jesus in me. AMEN

Missional/Spiritual Practice: Gifts

I commit to discovering, developing, and deploying the spiritual gifts God has entrusted to me for the building of the body of Christ.

I commit to using my spiritual gifts to be a witness in this world and to usher in the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:1-16

New International Version

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.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it^[a] says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”^[b]

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions^[c]? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Footnotes

- a. [Ephesians 4:8](#) Or *God*
- b. [Ephesians 4:8](#) Psalm 68:18
- c. [Ephesians 4:9](#) Or *the depths of the earth*

The Message

4 ¹⁻³ In light of all this, here’s what I want you to do. While I’m locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don’t want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don’t want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

⁴⁻⁶ You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

⁷⁻¹³ But that doesn’t mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. The text for this is,

He climbed the high mountain,
He captured the enemy and seized the plunder,
He handed it all out in gifts to the people.

Is it not true that the One who climbed up also climbed down, down to the valley of earth? And the One who climbed down is the One who climbed back up, up to highest heaven. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ’s followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ’s body, the church, until we’re all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God’s Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ No prolonged infancies among us, please. We’ll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are easy prey for predators. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.