# **Ephesians 4:1-16 CEV**

Today as I deliver an outline, you will provide the colour, it will be your own thoughts that create the relevance of my words to your lives . I pray something I say will speak to you by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians is one of the four letters that Paul the apostle wrote from prison. It is a book that deals with topics at the very core of what it means to be a Christian—both in faith and in practice.

Paul spent the first three chapters of the letter discussing God’s creation of a holy community because of Jesus, His life, death and resurrection; God’s gift of grace. The members of this community have been chosen by God, adopted as his sons and daughters.

Paul prays for all people with this faith, all those once dead in their sins but now alive in Christ. He prays that this community, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will become a living and vibrant community of faith. Paul is encouraging the Christian community in Ephesians to grow to maturity in their faith and to walk in accordance with its heavenly calling.

 ([Ephesians 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nlt/Eph%204.1)). begins

As a prisoner of the Lord, I beg you to

 live in a way that is worthy of the people God has chosen to be his own.

What will this worthy life look like? Paul goes on;-

‘’always be humble and gentle, patiently put up with each other and love each other,’’ so, by contrast, we are not to be arrogant and rough, not impatient, nor dismissive of each other.

*How can this to be achieved?*

‘’Try your best to **let God’s Spirit keep your hearts united.’’**

**So we are not to supress God’s spirit.** *1 Thessalonians 5 contains*  **a similar theme in**

# Paul says, and I summarise,

God wants **us** to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, ……**we** may live **together** with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up. t….

….acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who correct you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. …warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else……**Do not quench the Spirit.  *Imagine it, do not put out the fire of the Holy Spirit!***  Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

Returning to Ephesians, ‘’Do this by living at peace’’,

*John 14 :2 ‘’Peace, I Jesus, leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid’’.*

Don’t be at odds with each other, fighting over your differences.

What differences? We are familiar with the usual distinctions;– race, gender, age, ability sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, appearances, educational achievements, skills, occupations …*(pause for ideas to come to the fore)….*the list is almost infinite. Then there are differences that we might be completely unaware of. Others might think are insignificant, we then diminish the impact they have on character, on resilience, on prospects in life. I recall that I was an adult before I had any real level of understanding the integration of ones sensory input, sight, sound, feel etc were highly varied and made enormous differences to the development of a child and indeed to adults. *What am I talking about ? Well, simple e.g. does wool make you itchy? so, you choose not to wear woollen scarves perhaps, but imagine a child who refuses to put on their lovely warm soft knitted jumper that Nanna made specially. Imagine the tantrum, the ‘’unreasonable’’ behaviour, the obstinate refusal to dress. So, conflict is generated by misunderstanding and lack of appreciation of a small but significant difference in sensory preference.* E.g. two, In my current work my understanding of the impacts of trauma is growing from small beginnings. For others their own life-long experience gives them expertise far beyond my own purely academic understanding. So it is that differences, so unique to each of us, not only define us but also challenge us all. To be truly inclusive in society and particularly in our Christian community, how does this work better? Answers… listening, really listening. Learning both by incidental experience and by intent . apologizing..

Pat has explored with us the importance of confession of our shortcomings, of repentance or a U-Turn in our spiritual path and accepting forgiveness. This process applies to many situations but in terms of inclusion Ephesians points us forward.

 Remember, *All of you are part of the* ***one body****.*

 *There is only* ***one Spirit*** *of God, just as you were given* ***one hope*** *when you were chosen to be God’s people. We have only* ***one Lord****,* ***one faith****, and* ***one baptism****. There is* ***one God*** *who is the Father of all people. Not only is* ***God above all others, but he works by using all of us, and he lives in all of us***

So, we are all inextricably woven together to compliment each other within the whole body of Christ. As Paul establishes in his letter to the Corinthians

# 1 Corinthians 12:27 NIV

# Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

*We don’t want negative division but how can we be* ***positively*** *divided?*

Christ has **generously divided out his gifts** to us.

Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors, and teachers,

Why divided in this way? Ephesians states these varied gifts are at work for a common outcome; so that His people would **learn to serve and His body would grow strong.**

**This is a process of communal growth.** Continual growth until we are truly **united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God**. Then we will be **mature**, just as Christ is, and **we will be completely like him.** To God be the Glory!

This is not an individual journey but a journey of togetherness, as a community of believers, of followers, i.e. permitting the Spirit to break us melt us, mold us and fill us. Submitting to the Holy Spirit of the Living God is permitting God to be the author and finisher of our faith. Simply that!

Paul’s last instruction in this chapter is not to be forever children, no Peter Pan here! We must not let deceitful people trick us by their false teachings, their own fantasies, which blow us about like winds that *toss us around* from place to place.

How are we like children?

Maybe too dependent on one person to make things happen, rather than taking a shared interest and responsibility for a common life.

We need all those different God given gifts to be given their full expression to be a healthy community of discipleship.

 Effort is called for, but note that the effort is to “maintain the unity”, not to “create” the unity. The unity is a given, as we read , by the one body and one Spirit etc. God has created all things in unity, and in Christ through the power of the Spirit God has accomplished the reconciliation of all things so that all might grow up into the fullness of Christ. Our job is not to create it, but to maintain our participation in it, to tend and nurture it as it is expressed in our congregational life and mission.

One of the crucial ingredients in this kind of unity and belonging will be a new level of accountability to one another. As people put up their hands up to say that they can be relied upon to play particular kinds of roles in our common life, occasionally every single one of us will sometimes let the team down. We are all growing in this, and none of us will get it right all the time. And an important part of our growing up into Christ will be the ability to both encourage and challenge one another to keep stepping up or step down to do or be what God has gifted and called us to.

The one Father has given us in the one Spirit. The unity is a given. We are called to be one, and to engage together in the life and mission of the one God. All this is a gift, a gift of Grace and what it means to be a Christian—both in faith and in practice.

We are one in the Spirit

O the Deep Deep Love of Jesus

Create in Me a pure Heart guitar version to finish service with Pats round up of childrens talk.

Brother, Sister, let me serve you