**1. Motivate**

When have you been in a situation where working together was a necessity, not an option?

* on a sports team
* moving a large piece of furniture

A video introduction to the Bible study is available. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/bdf4y4zn> If you don’t have wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/3erx6kmw>

* a team project at work
* building a house
* launching a boat at a boat ramp
* playing a card game with a partner
* working a group project in school
* parenting your kids

**2. Transition**

Today we look at what keeps the church unified …

* We are diverse individuals
* At the same time God calls us to unity … which takes work

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 One in the Spirit

Listen for use of the word “one”.

Ephesians 4:1-7 (NIV) 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.

According to this passage, what are actions and attitudes that show we walk worthy of our calling?

* humility
* gentleness
* patience
* bearing with one another in love
* unity
* peace

What kinds of habits or choices do believers sometimes make that shortchange God … times when we do *not* walk worthy of what He deserves?

* displays of anger, road rage (verbal reactions, driving habits, etc.)
* impatience with our children
* causing discord by gossip
* trying to impress others with our abilities
* harsh words with family members
* purity of thought, motives

Paul mentions *unity.* What keeps sports teams unified?

* common purpose (win the game, beat the opposition)
* practicing and working together
* executing a play with proper timing
* they get so they can anticipate one another’s moves
* a feeling of fellowship and camaraderie
* correct use of each individual’s skills or strengths

Since churches and their members are so diverse, what unifies us as the body of Christ?

* the basic Truth of the Gospel message
* God’s Spirit at work in our lives … convicting/convincing us of our need to depend on Him
* putting God first in our lives … giving up the selfish desires and attitudes
* allowing God to live out through us the Fruit of the Spirit

Note the factors Paul enumerated that make for unity in the church. These are his uses of the word “one”.

* One Body (the Body of Christ the Church), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, God’s grace

How does each contribute to the concept of unity among believers?

* we worship and serve the same God
* God’s Holy Spirit indwells each believer, guiding and empowering each one to minister to each other and build each other up
* we all have the same hope …
* we all trust in the same Truth of Jesus’ atoning death and life giving resurrection

What attitudes and actions can we take that would build *unity in our church*?

* praying for one another
* acts of unsolicited kindness
* work together to accomplish a particular ministry
* having the same goals, the common purpose
* support church leadership
* refrain from criticism (you might disagree, but keep it to yourself … *pray* about it)
* participate in worship … don’t just sit there with arms folded and a scowl on your face
* *use* your Spiritual Gifts … that’s what they are for … the edification of the church
* learn to appreciate one another’s particular skills

3.2 God Equips for Ministry

Listen for what unity does *not* mean.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's 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.

What specific skills do you see listed here that God gives?

* apostles

Note that this is not an exhaustive list. Other skills are listed in other of Paul’s letters. Also, Paul could not have imagined such gifts as church bus mechanic or church web site manager.

* prophets
* evangelists
* pastors
* teachers

What does Paul say is the purpose of these gifts?

* to prepare God’s people for works of service
* so the Body of Christ (the Church) may be built up
* to bring us to unity in the faith and knowledge of Christ
* to bring us to (spiritual) maturity
* to help us attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ

The KJV uses the word “perfect” in verse 13 “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect** man” What are some synonyms of this word?

* faultless
* complete
* precise
* unflawed
* whole
* finished
* accurate
* ideal
* mature

So, what does it mean to be a “perfect” man or woman?

* wholly submitted to the rule of God’s Spirit in your life
* trusting in God’s salvation and God’s empowering and direction
* acting in God’s love

How have you seen church leaders equip the saints in a way that brought unity and growth towards perfection in the church? What are some ways you have been equipped by the church?

* preaching and teaching God’s Truth faithfully
* discipling new believers
* helping believers discover the Spiritual Gift God has given them
* giving people a responsibility which uses their Spiritual Gift
* delegating responsibility
* encouraging believers and affirming God’s working in their lives
* mentoring future leaders
* challenging young people to answer the call to serving God

3.3 Ministering Alongside Others

Listen for how God uses our gifts.

Ephesians 4:14-16 (NIV) 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 men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into 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.

How does Paul describe spiritual “infants”?

* tossed back and forth by waves
* blown here and there by every wind of teaching
* easily fooled by false teaching
* deceived by people with clever (but false) ideas

What are we supposed to be doing, according to verse 15?

* speaking the truth in love
* grow up, mature
* allowing Christ to be the “Head” or the One in charge
* He is the head of the Body of Christ
* He directs, controls the movements, the activities of the Body

What should be happening to a healthy body, according to verse 16?

* held together, not splintering apart
* growing
* maturing
* building itself in love
* each part/member doing the task God intends

What imagery did Paul use to describe the relationship of Christ to the Church?

* He is the Head
* we are the rest of the body
* held together, not splintering apart
* growing, maturing
* building itself in love
* each part/member doing the task God intends

What advice would you give someone seeking to balance speaking truth and showing love?

* speak with kindness
* prepare with much prayer
* choose words carefully
* make sure your “truth” is indeed Truth, based on God’s Word
* make sure your “truth” is not just your opinion or your own personal interpretation
* be careful of your motives … don’t speak just to be “telling someone off” or “giving them a piece of your mind”

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Cultivate unity.

* Pray for unity in your church. Repent of actions and attitudes that destroy unity.
* Confess these things to others if appropriate.

Support church leaders.

* Participate in an opportunity your church leaders provide for training and equipping members (Heb. 13:17).
* Invite another group member to attend with you.

Engage in ministry.

* Assess your spiritual gifts. Commit to serve in a ministry role you have not served in before.
* Ask God to help you find the place He has prepared for you.

Cryptogram Assignment

An operative in Qualdo Koeast who works with Samaritan’s Purse brought this out of the country and forwarded it to us. It’s in that funny code. See the key and the sample below. We need your help. When you finish, pass the message along to your outreach chairman. Technical help and other Fun Family Activities are found at <https://tinyurl.com/3erx6kmw>

