

WEEK 7

MADE ALIVE

The Book of Ephesians



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WEEK 7
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CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A **PASSAGE** TO READ,
... SOME **COMMENTS** TO CONSIDER,
... THREE **QUESTIONS** TO ASK,
... A **PRAYER** TO PRAY.



WEEK 7

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DAY 1

WORTHY OF THE CALLING

First read Ephesians 4:1-3.

Paul again refers to himself as a prisoner (see 3:1). Remember, he's writing this letter from a jail cell in Rome. But he's being more than literal. Paul's chains establish his authority and integrity for his impending exhortation. After all, he's not a prisoner of Rome but **"for the Lord"** (v.1a). The nature and cost of his gospel work are a type of spiritual bondage. So it is for all who follow Jesus.

To be a prisoner of the Lord means to **"walk in a manner worthy of the calling"** (v.1). In other words, we don't walk (or live) as we please. We do what pleases the Lord. The Proverbs regularly warn readers not to do what is **"wise in your own eyes"** (see Proverbs 3:7). Instead, we should live as people who **"have been called"** by God according to his will and purposes (v.1c). To be bound to him is to live like him, by the power of his Spirit. Namely, we live **"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love"** (v.2). But living this way is costly.

Many of us learn to live by the principle that *I am my own and I belong to myself* (Noble, 19). We measure life through self-actualization, not self-denial. In our flesh, we don't want to be bound to the will or purposes of another. Being a prisoner of the Lord directly violates our instincts of moral autonomy. Jesus knows this. That's why he died first. While we refused to surrender our lives, Jesus surrendered his. You see, we don't *secure* the unity of the Spirit; we *maintain* it. That's because Jesus didn't just die first, but he also walked in a manner worthy of the calling before us.



DAY 1
WORTHY OF THE
CALLING

1. Why do you think the Lord wants us to walk in a worthy manner?
2. In what ways do you resist living according to God's will and purposes?
3. How does Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection empower you to walk as he did?

Heavenly Father ...

Through your Spirit, bind me to your will and purposes today. Empower me to live with humility, gentleness, patience, love, and peace.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 2

ONE BODY

First read Ephesians 4:4-5.

The Church is a body—*the body of Christ*. And since the Lord has united his people through peace, we're *one body* (vv.3,4a). *But what does this metaphor teach us about the nature of the Church?*

Well, in his correspondence with believers in Corinth, Paul gives us a robust articulation of this word picture. He starts with unity through diversity. He says, **“just as the body is one and has many members ... so it is with Christ”** (1 Corinthians 12:12). Eyes and ears play unique roles, but they only find meaning and power when placed appropriately in a healthy body (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-20). The same is true with followers of Jesus. We're uniquely called and created but made for each other. We're many, but one.

This oneness empowers our witness. A body isn't just about unity. It's also about representation. God made people with bodies **“in the image of God”** (Genesis 1:27b). That means we're made to reflect the nature and character of our Creator. This is particularly true as members of the body, the Church. Before he ascended, Jesus commissioned his first followers to **“be my witnesses”** (Acts 1:8). In word, deed, and character the Church represents Christ as he brings healing and redemption to the world.

A witness is someone who has seen or experienced something. But in the language of the New Testament, a witness (*martys*) also suffers. While the metaphor teaches us about our unity and purpose, it also speaks to our vulnerability. A body bleeds. Bearing witness to Jesus in a broken world leads to suffering (see John 16:33). After all, Jesus himself **“bore our sins in his body on the tree”** (1 Peter 2:24). Yet we're comforted because, **“If one member suffers, all suffer together,”** and the Body of Christ will one day be fully redeemed (1 Corinthians 12:26)



DAY 2

ONE BODY

1. How is God one? How is God many?
2. Is it harder to see yourself as one (a member) or as many (part of a body)? Why?
3. How does Jesus' life and death help us see our individual worth and communal identity?

Heavenly Father ...

For my church family, make us one. Help us to share your love with patience and kindness. Empower us to live as humble representatives of your Son's grace and mercy. By your Spirit, may our neighbors see you through us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 3

ONE SPIRIT

First read Ephesians 4:4-5.

The Spirit of God is the third person of the Trinity. Early Christian tradition described him as “the Lord, the giver of life” (*Nicene Creed*). *But who is he, and what role does he play in history and our lives?*

From the opening scene of Scripture, we see the Spirit **“hovering over the face of the waters”** (Genesis 1:2). Through his presence, “God was sovereignly superintending the condition of the earth and preparing the way for his creative word” (*Matthews*, 136-7). The Spirit was laying a foundation for life. And when the moment came for God’s very good creation of humanity, God **“breathed into [Adam’s] nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”** (Genesis 2:7). The Spirit prepares the way, then brings the breath of life.

When Jesus comes to rescue humanity from death, the Spirit comes, too. And he brings life with him. Jesus ascends from the waters of baptism and the Spirit is **“descending like a dove”** (Matthew 3:16). Similarly, through Christ’s redemptive work, the Spirit descends on us, bringing new life to believers (see Romans 5:5). “The life that the Spirit gives,” explains theologian Michael Reeves, “is not some abstract thing ... The Spirit gives us his very self” (*Reeves*, 87). His presence produces the character of Christ in our lives by reminding us of everything Jesus taught (see Galatians 5:22-23 and John 14:26).

New life comes through the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit. But this isn’t a one-time act. What the Spirit gives, he protects forever. In other words, we’re not simply saved but **“sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”** (1:14). Professor Edmond Cloney says, “We may grieve the Spirit of God by whom we are kept till the day of redemption, and the Spirit may chastise us; He will certainly prove our faith through fiery trials, but always with the purpose of presenting us at last to God” (*The Holy Spirit as Seal and Pledge*, May 1, 1992). The Spirit is the giver and protector of our lives.



DAY 3
ONE SPIRIT

1. How have you experienced the Spirit's work in your life?
2. What (or who) do you trust to preserve and protect your life?
3. How does Christ through the Spirit give us ultimate hope in life and death?

Heavenly Father ...

Forgive me for all the ways I trust false hopes to give and protect my life. Refresh my heart, soul, mind, and body through your Spirit today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 4

ONE LORD

First read Ephesians 4:4-5.

The Lord is the second person of the Trinity. In the Old Testament, the Lord was the name for *Yahweh* (God's covenant name), but through early church history, Jesus is called Lord. *But what does his lordship tell us about his nature and our relationship with him?*

The common mantra of the Greco-Roman world was *Ceasar is Lord!* And so when the Apostle Paul claims that, in fact, *Jesus is Lord*, he's not simply preaching the gospel; he's rejecting the supposed good news of the day. Jesus' lordship is exclusive in the same way God's supremacy is exclusive. Yahweh said, **"You shall have no other gods before me"** (Deuteronomy 5:7). Therefore, it isn't surprising that Jesus says, **"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other"** (Matthew 5:24). Jesus' lordship is undivided.

Spiritual formation is a matter of lordship. In our sin, we all want to be in charge of our own lives. Things like money, sex, and power promise to secure the life we're looking for. We might presume these things are benign, but far too often, they control us. The Bible even teaches us these forces solicit our trust (see 2:1-2). Rebecca Pippert rightly observed that "Whatever controls us is our lord" (*Out of the Saltshaker*, 53). Life with Christ, then, is about daily learning to reject the gospels of this world and recommit our heart, soul, mind, and body to Jesus (see Deuteronomy 6:5).

However, our submission or even awareness of Jesus' lordship isn't what makes him Lord. His fame, worth, supremacy, and glory aren't contingent on our worship. At the inauguration of the Free University in October of 1880, Dr. Abraham Kuyper famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human life of which Christ, Who is Sovereign of all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" That's lordship.



DAY 4
ONE LORD

1. Why does God desire exclusive worship?
2. What are you prone to trust, love, and worship instead of Jesus? What controls you?
3. Why is Jesus worthy of our complete surrender?

Heavenly Father ...

You are holy. You are perfect. You are love. You are sovereign. You are Lord. Free me from lesser and destructive loves and powers. Help me to trust you, surrender to you, and celebrate you today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 5

ONE FAITH

First read Ephesians 4:4-5.

Because there's one Lord, there's also one faith. To our modern minds, this may seem harsh and intolerant. *So, why is it good and necessary for there to be one way to God and for humans to flourish?*

When a significant gospel threat was floating around his community, Jude wrote a letter to his beloved brothers and sisters. In it, he said, **“I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3). He's working hard to safeguard their one faith—their common body of belief—which was shared *once and for all*. Now, he's not concerned about some minor differences in cultural expression or interpretations. Jude was worried about those **“who pervert the grace of our God”** (Jude 4). You see, while faith in Jesus is expressed differently in different contexts, Jesus alone is the one in whom we place our faith.

Many find this exclusive and obtuse. And in some ways, it is. C.S. Lewis famously taught that Jesus was Lord, Liar, or Lunatic. He didn't leave an option for him to be one truth among many others. Jesus said, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”** (John 14:6). Yet, speaking to a large crowd, Jesus also said, **“If anyone would come after me”** (Mark 8:34). So, while Jesus is radically exclusive (*I am the way*), he's also radically inclusive (*If anyone would come*). Our one faith is wide open.



DAY 5
ONE FAITH

1. What does the nature of our “one faith” reveal about God’s character?
2. Is it harder for you to accept Jesus' inclusivity or exclusivity? Why?
3. How does Jesus heal us who struggle to submit to Jesus’ exclusivity? How does he heal us who resist his inclusive embrace?

Heavenly Father ...

No one loves like you. No one is holy like you. Through your love, release me from arrogance and judgment. Through your holiness, humble me to walk with obedience and worship.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.



FAMILY GUIDE

CONVERSATIONS STARTERS

DAY 1

Ephesians 4:4-5

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

God is Spirit.

What does it mean that God is Spirit? How does God the Spirit help us obey and love Jesus?

DAY 2

Ephesians 4:4-5

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

We are the Body.

How is our church like a body? How does Jesus want us to love and help our church family?

DAY 3

Ephesians 4:4-5

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Jesus is Lord.

What does it mean that Jesus is Lord? How should we obey and love Jesus today?

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To receive updates about this reading guide and discover more gospel resources to help you enjoy the truth and beauty of Jesus, please visit churchinthesquare.com.





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