



The Church: the unity of all believers

Ephesians 3:20 - 4:16

By Daniel J. Denk

We believe in the unity of all believers in Jesus Christ, manifest in worshipping and witnessing churches making disciples throughout the world.

Our commitment to the church and involvement in it is essential to Christian growth and maturity. Read [Ephesians 3:20 - 4:16](#). Note the important role of the church and how it works.

1. In Ephesians 3:20-21, Paul is moved to praise and worship God for his glorious work in the church. What can we learn about God's intention for the church in this short doxology of praise?
2. Paul urges us to walk worthy of our calling (v. 4:1). What are some ways that we can demonstrate this worthy calling (v. 4:1-3)? What is this calling (v. 4:4)? Do you think of yourself as a "called" person?
3. Clearly, one way that we can "walk worthy" is to preserve the unity and peace of the church, the Body (v. 4:3). What is the basis of this unity?
 - Notice the seven "ones" (vv. 4:4-6). List them. Can you find the Trinity in this list?
 - What else do you notice about the "ones" that might help us understand the importance of Christian unity?
 - How have you seen the importance of seeking unity in your fellowship?
4. A common image used in the New Testament to describe the church is "the body" (vv. 4:4; 4:15-16) with Christ as the Head of the Body (see also 1:22-23). How does this image help us understand the living and organic working of the church?
5. Some gifts of the church are described in vv. 7-13.
 - Who is the giver of the gifts (v.7)? How does this affect the way you think about these gifts and the church?
 - Verses 8-10 can be confusing. Christ is pictured as victorious in battle, probably a reference to his resurrection, with the image of receiving gifts as the spoils of victory. Christ descended when he became human and suffered, died and was buried. But he rose again victorious and ascended to heaven. Because of this victory he has authority to dispense these gifts freely to his church.
 - Notice the five gifts mentioned in v. 11. What or who are these gifts? What is unique about them? What do they have in common?
 - What is the essential purpose of these leadership gifts (v. 12)? What does it mean to "equip" or "prepare?" Who is expected to do the works of service or ministry? Why is this important?

6. When the church is working properly, with gifted leaders equipping and each of the members involved in acts of service, what is the result (12b-16)? This is a description of a healthy, functioning church.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

- What are the marks of maturity mentioned in vv. 13-16? Notice how the image of the Body continues to illustrate how the church is supposed to work. One of the keys is that “each part does its work.” How have you seen this in your fellowship group? In your church? How have you contributed to making this happen?
- In this passage, we see God’s intention for the church, the body of Christ, as a place where believers can mature together in a nurturing community. What steps have you taken to become an active member and participant in a local church? What might be some steps that you could take to make this more of a reality?

GOING DEEPER

Look at [Romans 12:4-8](#) and [1 Corinthians 12:12-31](#). Compare these verses with [Ephesians 3:20 - 4:16](#) to learn more about how the Body of Christ functions. What are the other gifts mentioned in these passages? How should we think about the gifts? See also [Acts 2:42-47](#), [1 Peter 2:9-12](#).

TOOLS FOR FURTHER GROWTH

[*Giving Church Another Chance*](#), by Todd Hunter, InterVarsity Press 2010. For those disillusioned with the church, Todd Hunter invites us on a journey to discover how the church is important to our lives as disciples of Jesus.

[*Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional*](#), by Jim Belcher, InterVarsity Press 2009. Jim Belcher provides an honest and fascinating personal journey through the emergent camp and why he returned to the traditional church.

[*Know the Truth: A Handbook for Christian Belief*](#), 3rd edition, by Bruce Milne, InterVarsity Press 2012. This is a doctrinal survey with an excellent section on the church. [Order ebook](#).

[*I Believe in the Church*](#), by David Watson, Eerdmans 1978. This is a very practical story of the church told from the heart of a pastor, evangelist, and spiritual mentor to many in England. It’s part of the excellent “I Believe” series by Eerdmans.

[*The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*](#), by John Stott, InterVarsity Press 2006. Stott shares his dream for a church that is biblical, worshipping, caring, serving and expectant.