

BECOMING A PEOPLE OF GRACE

STUDY TWELVE

A Worthy Walk

Ephesians 4:1–6

The whole point is this: when you “walk in a manner worthy of the calling,” you will be like Christ and people will notice. You won’t have to wear a badge. You won’t have to wave flags. You’ll walk the walk, and they won’t be able to deny it.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MOST of Paul’s letters contain a “hinge”—a point where they shift from theoretical to practical, from principle to application. Often Paul signaled this change in direction with the word *therefore* (Romans 12:1; Galatians 5:1; Colossians 3:1 NASB). In keeping with Paul’s pattern, the first word we meet at the beginning of Ephesians 4 is “Therefore” (Ephesians 4:1), which is the hinge point in this letter. To see Paul’s dividing point illustrated, refer to the [chart of Ephesians](#) on our website or in the first study in this series.

In the first half of Ephesians, we sat in awe as Paul unveiled a starry host of theological wonders:

- Our adoption as God’s children (1:4–5)
- The hope of our inheritance (1:11, 18)
- Christ’s glorious rule (1:20–23)
- God’s lavish grace (2:1–10)
- Our reconciliation with God and unity with each other in God’s family (2:11–3:13)
- The Lord’s incomparable love (3:14–21)



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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We've learned so much about our spiritual blessings in Christ. Now, as we begin the second half of Paul's letter, it's time to get up and set out through the gate marked "therefore." On the other side, a grand adventure awaits as Paul leads us through the twists and turns of church life, marriage, family relationships, work, and even spiritual battles. Our pilgrims' path winds as far as we can see, all the way home to God.

Are we ready to hit the trail? Let's lace up our boots, strap on our packs, swing open the gate, and set out on our journey lit by the starlight of God's grace.¹



PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you step into this new territory, you'll notice that Paul gives a lot of commands, which can feel overwhelming. We have so much to do and so far to go! Just remember that God, through His "unlimited resources," will "empower you with inner strength through his Spirit" (Ephesians 3:16). The key to survival on the trail is step-by-step, moment-by-moment dependence on the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide.

As you begin this journey into practical Christian living, confess your need for His empowerment to transform you from the inside out and to do through you what you can't do on your own.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck Swindoll reminds us that observing a passage takes time. He writes, "Discipline and diligence are required when we prepare our own meals from the Bible, just as time and effort are required when we cook physical meals."²

Linger over *Ephesians 4:1–6* as you read the passage in multiple versions of the Bible. Read it aloud and more than once, allowing the words to simmer in your soul. Notice Paul's *overarching command* in verse 1, how we live it out in verses 2–3, and *the reason for it* in verses 4–6. Also, look for Paul's lists: five character qualities in verses 2–3 and the sevenfold repetition of the word *one* in verses 4–6.



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Observation: How to Walk in Unity

Now let's examine each component of Paul's opening instructions, beginning with his overarching command which sets the theme for the rest of Ephesians: practical ways we walk worthy of our calling.³

Overarching Command—Ephesians 4:1

Paul had dedicated his life to teaching the truths in Ephesians 1–3 and walking in a manner worthy of them, which led to his present circumstances. How did Paul refer to himself in *4:1*? And what point do you think he was making right before imploring his readers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling?

Paul used the Greek verb *peripateō* which, literally, means “to walk” but refers “to one's lifestyle or pattern of behavior.”⁴ What does this idiom imply about the Christian life?

From Paul's Greek word for “worthy” we get our English word, *axiom*—which, according to commentator Kent Hughes, means “to be of equal weight.”⁵ We are to live in a manner *equal* to our “calling” (Ephesians 4:1). For example, when a princess is called to be queen, she must learn to act in a manner equal to her new role. She is crowned queen, now she must act like a queen.

Similarly, God has crowned us “his holy people” (1:18) and united us as “one new people” (2:15); now, Paul pleads, we must act like the people He called—holy and as one in unity. Later, in Ephesians 4:17–5:20, Paul reveals how to live a holy life. In the immediate passage, Paul explains how to walk the steppingstones of unity by cultivating five essential character qualities.



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How to Walk in Unity—Ephesians 4:2–3

The following chart lists four of the five character qualities in the left column. In the right column, write down your definition of these virtues, and if you need help, read *Ephesians 4:2* in the Amplified Bible.

Character Quality	Definition from the Amplified Bible
Humility (Ephesians 4:2 NASB)	
Gentleness (4:2 NASB)	
Patience (4:2 NASB)	
Tolerance (4:2 NASB)	



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Notice that Paul seems to pair the first two virtues and the second two. What do you think is the connection between humility and gentleness? And what links patience with tolerance?

Humility expresses itself in gentleness which results in patiently making allowances for one another. One steppingstone leads to the next and the next, culminating in the fifth virtue: *agape*. This Greek word for “love” means to sacrificially seek the well-being of others, to look out not for our own interests but for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4). Love is both the apex and the basis for all virtues, our all-encompassing standard for moral behavior.

What did Paul say was the outcome of these inner qualities (*Ephesians 4:3*)?

When I step into the body of Christ as a result of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for me, having paid the price on the cross, I step into the realm of unity that He has established. That’s what He wants for His body. The apostle implores ministers, congregational members, believers, young and old alike, “Lay down the arms. Pick up the belt of peace.”
—Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: Why We Walk in Unity

To help us discover the reason God wants us to walk in unity, Paul leads us into the mystery of the Trinity itself, where God’s “three-in-oneness” is on display.

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. (Ephesians 4:4–6)

Can you identify the seven “ones” in this passage? Write them down here and what each one means. For help with definitions, consult Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians* or, for an online resource, *Constable’s Notes* at NetBible.org.

Paul seems to cluster the first three “ones” around the Spirit, the second three around the Lord Jesus, and the final “one” on God the Father. The apostle repeats the word *one* as if ringing a church bell to get the church members’ attention: *We must preserve our unity!* What was Paul trying to communicate by repeating the word *one* so many times and linking the church’s unity with the oneness of God?



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Commentator John Stott aptly capsulizes the interpretation:

We must assert that there *can* be only one Christian family, only one Christian faith, hope, and baptism, and only one Christian body, because there is only one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . . . Is there only one God? Then he has only one church. Is the unity of God inviolable? Then so is the unity of the church. The unity of the church is as indestructible as the unity of God himself.⁶



Correlation: Jesus' Prayer for Unity

In the waning hours before Jesus went to the cross, our Lord prayed for His present and future followers to be one. As you read a portion of His prayer, can you see where Paul gets his teaching about oneness in the Trinity and the church?

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.” (John 17:20–23)

Because we are one with Christ who is one with the Father, we are one with each other. We might say that unity is in our spiritual DNA. It runs in our heavenly family! What impact did Jesus say this distinguishing trait has on those outside the family?

The world will know us as Christ's followers because we display the single-most identifiable mark of our Savior—His love.



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The “bond of peace” is secured when we work in harmony with each other, when we allow love to flow freely, and when we forgive quickly. The most powerful testimony a church can demonstrate is unity. Don’t think the world doesn’t spot it. It amazes them when they see a truly happy church, when they see a church of any size working in harmony.

—Chuck Swindoll



Application: Living in Unity

God has called us to a life of great beauty. Peace instead of hostility, grace instead of rigid demands, kindness in place of harshness, enriching companionship instead of lonely striving. All these good and lovely qualities mark the path ahead of us. But such beauty is not skin deep. The outer glow radiates from the inner virtues of humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, and most of all, love. Develop these virtues in the members of any church, and eye-catching unity will follow.

Which of these character qualities would you like Christ to develop in your spirit? These virtues shone beautifully through Jesus, and He is in you (John 17:23). In a quiet moment of prayer, ask the Lord to light up one of these virtues in you this week. What would that virtue look like in your closest relationships?

Sure, the differences between individuals are many. Each one of us is uniquely gifted, and our personalities are as varied as the shades on a painter’s color wheel. However, as Paul will teach us in our next study, our individuality enhances our unity in the body of Christ and makes His church truly beautiful.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, just as You are one with the Son and the Spirit, may those who bear Your name be equally unified. We do not have many objects of our faith but one: Jesus. We are baptized only in Your name. And our hope is only in Your promise. All these cords tie us together as one. You have called us to be one people and so, in our families and churches, may we live as one. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Parts of this study are adapted from Insight for Living Ministries, “A Worthy Walk,” in *Becoming a People of Grace Study Guide* (Plano, TX: IFL Publishing House, 2001).
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 57. To learn more about Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).”
3. We walk in unity (Ephesians 4:1–16); we walk in purity (4:17–5:20); we walk in mutual submission (5:21–6:9); we walk in victory (6:10–24).
4. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Galatians, Ephesians*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 228.
5. R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 121.

