

## **Faith to Unite – Teaching Notes**

(Ephesians 4:1-16; 12/31/17)

**Introduction:** A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that God wants His people to love one another and do good works for Him. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to work on loving one another and doing good works.

### **Body:**

#### **Read Ephesians 4:1-6**

**I. Reason for Unity.** Paul identifies himself as a prisoner for the Lord. He urges the believers in the church of Ephesus to live a life worthy of the calling that they have received. Humility, patience, gentleness, and bearing with one another is encouraged. There is a strong push for unity.

#### **Applications –**

- **Prisoners for the Lord.** Notice in vs.1 that Paul refers to himself as a prisoner for the Lord. Paul endured much suffering because of his commitment to following Jesus. In like manner, as disciples of Christ, we should be willing to endure some suffering for Jesus' sake. Too many of those who have been in church for decades are too quick to quit, when trouble comes. *Let's work on having the faith to endure imprisonment/suffering for the Lord.* Prayerful study with a mind to obey and with the support of other disciples can help in this area.

- **Walking worthy.** Notice in vss. 1-6 the call to live in accord with how God is calling us to live. High on God's list are the matters of loving and get along with other believers. This calls for humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance. God calls His people to give serious effort to developing and maintaining unity of the Spirit and bond of peace. *Let's work on walking in line with God's will, which includes getting along with other believers.*

#### **Read Ephesians 4:7-11**

**II. Means to Attain Unity.** Each believer has been given a portion of grace by the will of Christ. Christ is the one who has both descended and ascended, in the text. Christ gave gifted people as gifts to the church.

#### **Applications –**

- **God's grace and favor.** Notice in vss. 7-10 that Christ gives every believer some grace or favor. First, since it is grace and favor, not a deserved reward, we should be humble with what God has given us. There is no room for arrogance among those who have simply received God's grace and favor. Without God's grace and favor, all of us would be nothing. Second, because God thought enough of us to show us grace and favor, we should carefully use what God has given us for His glory. *Let's work on being so appreciative of God's grace and favor that we use it for God's glory.*

- **Taking care of the gifts.** Notice in vs. 11 that Christ gave gifted people to the church as gifts. First, God gives abilities to serve to His people. We can debate if people still have the gift of apostleship and prophesy today, but there should be no debate about God giving every believer at least one ability to serve. Second, God also gives gifted people to the church as a gift. Those who have the gifts need to Pastor a church, assist the Pastor as an officer in the church, or carry out duties in the church are all gifts. We should thank God for the gifts and take care of them. *Let's*

*work on taking care of and using as intended the gifts that God has given us individually and as a church family.*

### **Read Ephesians 4:12-16**

**III. Results of Unity.** The gifted people are to help equip God's people for works of service. They are to help the church experience unity of faith, knowledge, and maturity. Each part of the body has a work to do.

#### **Applications –**

**- Doing our parts in the maturing body.** Notice in vss. 12-13, 16 that the gifted people that God gives to the church, including the Pastor, are to focus on helping people discover and use their gifts in serving the Lord. Every part of the body has a duty to carry out. The gifted people are to also help the people grow up in the Lord. This growing up should include a oneness of faith (salvation), knowledge (membership orientation material, etc.), and maturity, (study, serve, give, etc.). In order for this to take place, the gifted people need to stay focused on their assignments, instead of just trying to please the people. And the people need to appreciate both the role of the gifted people and their roles as members of the body. *Let's work on doing are parts in the growing body of Christ.*

**- Stable and speaking the truth in love.** Notice in vss.14-15 that as the body of Christ grows/matures, it is known for being stable, instead of being tossed back and forth with the craftiness of people. The maturing church is also known for speaking the truth in love. First, when there is great discord and division in the church, it demonstrates a great amount of immaturity. God's people should be able to discern and stand on the truth together or respectfully agree to disagree about secondary matters. Second, the people of God should be known for speaking the truth in love. This calls for speaking, instead of being silent. It calls for speaking the truth, not just what people want to hear. And it calls for speaking the truth in love. Sometimes we can speak the truth too abrasively. *Let's work on being stable and speaking the truth in love as a church family.*

**Conclusion:** Let's work on loving one another and doing good works. God has much for those who obey His will.