

What we know about God and what we do for God have a way of getting broken apart in our lives. The moment the organic unity of belief and behavior is damaged in any way- we are incapable of living out the full humanity for which we were created.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians joins together what has been torn apart in our sin-wrecked world. He begins with an exuberant exploration of what Christians believe about God, and then, like a surgeon skillfully setting a compound fracture, "sets" this belief in God into our behavior before God so that the bones—belief and behavior—knit together and heal.

Once our attention is called to it, we notice these fractures all over the place. There is hardly a bone in our bodies that has escaped injury, hardly a relationship in city or job, school or church, family or country, that isn't out of joint or limping in pain. There is much work to be done.

And so Paul goes to work. He ranges widely, from heaven to earth and back again, showing how Jesus, the Messiah, is eternally and tirelessly bringing everything and everyone together. He also shows us that in addition to having this work done in and for us, we are participants in this most urgent work. Now that we know what is going on, that the energy of reconciliation is the dynamo at the heart of the universe, it is imperative that we join in vigorously and perseveringly, convinced that every detail in our lives contributes (or not) to what Paul describes as God's plan worked out by Christ, "a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth."

For more introductory material on Ephesians, visit <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-ephesians/>

Read Ephesians 4

Opening

- What is your favorite team sport?
- What is the best piece of clothing you have had for years and can't seem to discard?

Digging in — Discovering the Word

- Of the qualities listed in verse 2, which did you demonstrate the best today? The worst?
- What is God's purpose in giving gifts to his people? Why is it important that each part of "the body" does its work?
- What does it mean to speak "the truth in love" (v.15)? How is this different from just speaking truth?
- According to this passage, what's the problem with trying to live the Christian life apart from the church? In what ways do you need others?
- On a scale of 1 (apart) to 10 (together), how unified is your church? How are you doing at fulfilling your call to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (v.3)?
- How would you compare moral standards today with the moral standards in Paul's day?
- What does it mean "to put off your old self" and "to put on the new self"?
- How do you usually deal with anger? What do you learn about anger from verses 26-27?
- What grade would you give yourself on putting verse 29 into practice this last week?
- From verses 31 and 32, what negative attitudes should we eliminate and what positive attitudes should we cultivate?
- How have your attitudes, actions and thoughts changed since turning your life over to God?

Connecting the Dots — Applying the Word

- Are you living up to the "calling you have received" (v.1)? In your work? Your home? Your relationships? Why or why not?
- Of the four jobs Paul describes for a management team, which job would you choose: apostle (pioneer and church planter), Prophet (motivator and encourager), evangelist (soul winner) or pastor/teacher (trainer and coach)? How can you develop this gift?
- Are you more likely to "speak the truth" or "in love" try to keep the peace at any price? To achieve a balance, what do you need to learn?
- What are the positive and/or negative motivations which prompt you to live a Christian life? Where do you feel you are making progress in your Christian life?
- Of all the commands given here for Christian living, which seems to be the major command God is challenging you with in your life?

(adapted from the Serendipity Bible and The Invitation by Eugene Peterson)