

# Living with New Eyes

## *St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*

### Study 8 | Ephesians 4:1-6

- 1. To what does Paul urge the church in verses 1-3? Why does he need to do this? What are the animosities and divisions in our own lives to which we might apply Paul's exhortations?**

Paul begins, strikingly enough, by reminding them that he speaks to them as 'a prisoner for the Lord'--that is, whatever he is about to exhort them, he himself knows what it means to suffer by submitting to God. He goes on to "urge" them (the Greek is very strong) to 'walk in a manner worthy of the calling' they have been given as Christians. That 'manner' is then explained as the following: 'with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' Notice how horizontal Paul's exhortation are! The whole context concerns the ways in which various Christians relate to one another. There are no doubt hundreds of potential reasons Paul might have needed to urge the Ephesians toward unity, from personal animosity and grudges to racism and religious discrimination. Remember the Jew vs. Gentile problem Paul has been railing against already in this letter. The fact is that this problem--of division, animosity, impatience--is one that every church and Christian will face continuously in life and so Paul urges Christian churches to maintain peace throughout all his letters.

- 2. In verses 4-5 Paul gives extra theological motivation for his challenge of unity. What is his argument? How does it apply to the church then and now? What unity is already ours as the church? What is yet necessary?**

This is Paul's theological trumpet blast when it comes to a doctrine of Christian unity. Listen to the foundation Paul lays for Christian unity. 'There is one' a) Body (*i.e.* Christ's; the church), b) Holy Spirit, c) Hope, d) Call, e) Lord, f) Faith, g) Baptism, e) God and Father of all. Paul's basic argument is that Christians have all this—and this is all that matters!—in common, so they should maintain that unity through patience, humility, longsuffering, peace, and love. For the Ephesians it meant at least that they should stop emphasizing their ethnic and socio-cultural heritages and differences, but should start focusing on what they had in common. And of course, it would mean much more to them as they encountered their various differences in life together as a community. For example, skim chapters 5 and 6 and look at the difference Paul deals with there: wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters.

How might this apply to the church today? Where are we most obviously divided across secondary or tertiary differences? Where have we failed to live up to Paul's urging? What unity does belong to us, even if only theologically and not yet concretely? Where does work need to be done?

**3. How can we specifically apply all of the above here in Brooklyn to our divided denominational milieu?**

Obviously, this is just a big discussion starter. Try to help your group to think through the many potential applications. Think of some of the things we have tried to do in our own church, such as ecumenical Good Friday services, providing service and ministry with and to churches of other denominations, pastor-to-pastor networking, etc. Try to get your group how easy it is to be a consumer in church choice and simply pick those most like us, rather than think about what we have in common with all true Christian churches and seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Think of constructive ways we can move beyond this tendency and pursue love and peace with out fellow Christians in Brooklyn.