

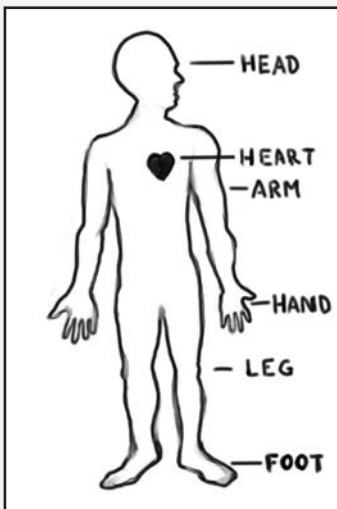
Peace and Agreement in the Church



SABBATH—AUGUST 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 4:1–16; Ephesians 4:7–10; Ephesians 4:11–13; Ephesians 4:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “Christ gave gifts to men. He gave to some [people] the gift to be missionaries [people who are sent to foreign countries to do religious work], some to be preachers, others [people] to be preachers who go from town to town. He gave others the gift to be church leaders and teachers. These gifts help His people work well for Him. And then the church which is the body of Christ will be made strong” (Ephesians 4:11, 12, NLV).



Paul uses the human body as a word picture to teach us a spiritual lesson.

PAUL uses the human body as a word picture to teach us a spiritual lesson (read Romans 12:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–31). The human body is made of many parts. Each part has a different job to do. All the parts must work together to keep the body healthy. The church is the same way. The church has many members. Each member has different skills. Each member has a different job to do in the church. All members must work together so that the church stays healthy. In Ephesians 4:1–16, Paul again uses the word picture of the body. Paul says that Jesus is now the “Head” or Leader of the church. As our Head, Jesus gives us gifts to help us work together in peace and agreement. Each member of the “body” or church works together to make the church strong.

Paul’s word picture of a healthy body helps us understand God’s plan for the church: God wants us to work together and to be at peace in Jesus.

AT PEACE IN THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 4:1–16)

Read Ephesians 4:1–16. How does Paul encourage church members to be at peace and in agreement with each other?

Paul starts the second half of Ephesians (chapters 4–6) with a special announcement. He asks church members to be at peace and in agreement with each other. Paul's announcement has two parts. First, in Ephesians 4:1–6, Paul asks church members to be at peace with each other in the Holy Spirit. Paul gives members a list of seven things that helps the church to be at peace and in agreement with each other (Ephesians 4:4–6). Second, in Ephesians 4:7–16, Paul says that Jesus is the One who gives mercy to His people. Jesus' mercy helps His people to know how to share the Good News with other people (Ephesians 4:7–10). Together, all the church members help the church stay healthy, grow strong, and become one in Jesus (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Paul starts Ephesians 4 with an invitation. Paul invites Christians to “live the way God's people should live, because he chose you to be his” people (Ephesians 4:1, ERV). The word written as “live” in this verse also means “to behave” (read Ephesians 2:2, 10; Ephesians 4:17; Ephesians 5:2, 8, 15). When Paul says that we've been “chosen,” he means that God invites us to accept the Christian faith and follow it (Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 2:4–6, 13). Paul wants our behavior to show God's plan to save humans (Ephesians 4:9, 10). So, Paul asks us to do those things that lead to peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4:1–3). Paul also asks us to be (1) loving, (2) patient, and (3) without pride in our hearts.

Let's look at these three behaviors.

A humble heart. Paul explains what it means to be humble or without any pride in your heart (Ephesians 4:2). Paul says that a humble person helps other people. A humble person also thinks other people are more important than himself (Philippians 2:3). Being humble and not having any pride in your heart doesn't mean you feel that you have no worth (read Colossians 2:18, 23). Being humble means you see the worth in other people and you enjoy serving them.

A loving spirit. Paul also asks us to be gentle or loving (Ephesians 4:2). A gentle or loving spirit means being kind or nice.

Being patient. Finally, a patient person is someone who stays calm and is filled with faith during hard times.



Being humble means you see the worth in other people and you enjoy serving them.

WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS (Ephesians 4:4–6)

Yesterday, we said that Paul gives members a list of seven things that helps the church to be at peace and in agreement with each other (Ephesians 4:4–6). What seven things are on Paul’s list?

Let’s look at Paul’s list:

1. **One body.** Paul’s list starts with “one body” (Ephesians 4:4, ERV). The body is a word picture for the church (Ephesians 4:12, 16; Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 5:23, 29, 30).
2. **One Spirit.** Read Ephesians 4:4.
3. **One hope.** Paul says that “God chose you to have one hope” (Ephesians 4:4, ERV).
4. **One Lord.** By these words, Paul means Jesus.
5. **One faith.** These words mean our Christian teachings (Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:23; Colossians 2:7; Galatians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:1, 6).
6. **One baptism.** (Compare Ephesians 5:26.)
7. **One God and Father.** God is our Father. Anyone can accept God as Father. He controls everything (Ephesians 4:6).

What special Bible truth is Paul telling us about God? As our Father, God is the One who made us. So, Paul announces that God controls everything.

Paul teaches us two important ideas about peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4:1–6). First, peace and agreement come from the seven things on Paul’s list (Ephesians 4:4–6). Second, if we want peace and agreement in the church, we must do our part. We must work together with the Holy Spirit to help peace and agreement to grow in the church. We may fail at times. We may often cry about the mistakes we make as we try to make peace and agreement happen in the church. Whatever mistakes we make, we should be happy about God’s work in Jesus. God works in Jesus to make peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4:3). When we remember to be happy about God’s work, we will work harder to make peace and agreement happen. We will know that we are working together with God to do His work.

Read again Ephesians 4:4–6. How do these verses make you feel? How *should* they make you feel when you remember that God accepts us because of Jesus?



If we want peace and agreement in the church, we must do our part.

JESUS, THE GIVER OF GIFTS (Ephesians 4:7–10)

“But each one of us has received [gotten] a gift of grace [mercy]. These gifts are given to us by Christ. That is why Scripture [the Old Testament] says,

‘When he [Jesus] went up to his place on high [in heaven],

he took many prisoners.

He gave gifts to his people’ [Psalm 68:18].

“What does ‘he went up’ mean? It can only mean that he also came down to the lower, earthly [on earth] places. The one who came down is the same one who went up. He went up higher than all the heavens [skies and outer space]. He did it [went up to heaven] in order to [so that he could] fill all creation [everything He made]” (Ephesians 4:7–10, NIV). What is Paul talking about in these verses?

In Ephesians 4:7–10, Paul uses a quote from Psalm 68:18. This quote shows us that Jesus is the same as a mighty general who beats his enemies in war. After the war, the general goes to the hill where his capital city is built. The general takes prisoners with him from the war (read Psalm 68:1, 2). Then the general gets gifts from all the people who lost the war. Paul changes this word picture a little bit in Ephesians 4:7–10. In Paul’s word picture, Jesus is the One who gives gifts.

Do you see what happens first in Psalm 68:18? First, Jesus goes up to heaven after He wakes up from the dead (Ephesians 1:21–23). Then Jesus comes back to earth and gives gifts to His people. Jesus keeps all His promises. These word pictures are Paul’s way of showing us Pentecost. Pentecost is the time when God poured His Spirit on the church (read Acts 2). Paul tells us about this Bible truth in Ephesians 4:11, 12. These verses explain that the gifts Jesus gave His church are gifts from the Holy Spirit.

“Jesus went to heaven after He won. Jesus gave gifts to His followers. After Jesus went to heaven, God kept His promise. He sent the Holy Spirit to the church. The Spirit’s coming was the same as a mighty wind that filled the whole place where Jesus’ followers waited. What happened? Thousands of people accepted Jesus in a day.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, page 158, adapted.

What comfort do you get from Ephesians 4:7–10? How do these verses show you what Jesus did for us?



The gifts Jesus gave His church are gifts from the Holy Spirit.

GIFTS FROM JESUS (Ephesians 4:11–13)

Paul uses Psalm 68:18 to show us that Jesus gives gifts to His people after He wakes up from the dead and goes to heaven. What gifts does Jesus give and why does He give them? Read Ephesians 4:11–13 for the answers.



The ship captain must obey the pilot.

Paul names four groups of people that Jesus gave as “gifts” to the church. These groups include: (1) church leaders; (2) special messengers; (3) traveling preachers; and (4) shepherds or local church pastors and teachers. Jesus “gave all these people so that they might [may] prepare [help] God’s people to serve. Then the body of Christ [Jesus] will be built up [made strong]” (Ephesians 4:12, NIV). Also, Jesus gave the gifts “so that we will all believe the one way and all know the Son of God. They [the gifts] are given so that we will be really grown-up Christians, like [the same as] Christ himself” (Ephesians 4:13, WE).

Ephesians 4:13 was important to the first Seventh-day Adventists. They had questions about the spiritual gifts of Ellen G. White. They asked, “Does the Bible say that special messengers lived only during New Testament times? Or will God continue to give special messengers to His church long after New Testament times? The first Adventists found the answers in Ephesians 4:13. The important rule in this verse can be shown in a picture story about a ship captain. The ship captain must follow the orders he got before he sailed. As the ship comes near port, the captain learns that a sea pilot will come on his ship to help lead it to port. The ship captain must allow the sea pilot to come aboard. The ship captain must obey the pilot. The pilot is a word picture for a messenger from God. The ship captain is a word picture for loyal Seventh-day Adventists. “Who will obey the sailing orders? Those people who reject the pilot? Or those people who accept him as they were ordered to do? You be the judge.”—Uriah Smith, “Do We Discard the Bible by Endorsing the Visions [of Ellen White]?” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 13, 1863, page 52, adapted.

Read Isaiah 5:4. In this verse the Lord says “ ‘What more was there to do for My grape-field that I have not done for it?’ ” (NLV). The grape-field is a word picture for God’s church. What gifts has God given our church? The writings of Ellen G. White are part of God’s gifts to us. How have her writings helped our church?

BECOMING BETTER AND STRONGER CHRISTIANS (Ephesians 4:14)

What danger keeps the church from growing strong? Read Ephesians 4:14 for the answer.

Paul warns church members against false teachings and clever tricks. He says, “The body of Christ must grow so that we will no longer be like [the same as] children. We are like children when we are pushed [keep changing our minds] this way and that way [all the time]. We change our minds every time people bring a different teaching. Some teachers teach the lies of men and fool [trick] people so that they believe wrong things” (Ephesians 4:14, WE).

Paul believes that disagreement comes from false ideas. Bible truth makes the church grow strong and brings agreement. But false teachings and ideas make the church weak and cause separation. So, false teachings are evil. That is why church members must reject false teachings. They must accept Bible truth from teachers they can trust (Ephesians 4:11). Then the church will grow strong in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:12, 13; compare Ephesians 4:15, 16).

In what ways is a healthy church the same as a healthy body? Read Ephesians 4:15, 16 for the answer.

In Ephesians 4:1–16, Paul asks church members to do everything they can to be at peace and in agreement with each other. Yes, God promises us peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4:4–6). At the same time, we must work hard to make peace and agreement happen (Ephesians 4:3). One way we can make peace and agreement happen is by doing the work God gave each of us to do in the church (Ephesians 4:7–16). Each one of us is part of God’s church. So, we should do everything we can to support the church’s health and growth (Ephesians 4:7, 16). Also, God wants us to be blessed by the work He gave to church leaders, special messengers, traveling preachers, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). All these members work together (Ephesians 4:16) and help us, as a church, to grow stronger together in Jesus, our Leader (Ephesians 4:13, 15).

What are some of the false teachings that we must reject today? How can we stand against these false ideas?



“Some teachers teach the lies of men and fool [trick] people so that they believe wrong things” (Ephesians 4:14, WE).



Jesus won the war against Satan and his evil angels (read Colossians 2:15).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The two comments below will help us better understand Ephesians 4:7–10:

1. How to understand Ephesians 4:9. Some Bibles say that Jesus came down to earth **first** before He went up to heaven (read ERV; ICB; NLV; KJV). Other Bibles say that Jesus went up to heaven and down to earth, but they don't say which one of these things Jesus did first (read Nlrv; WE). Psalm 68:18 helps us to understand what Paul means in Ephesians 4:9, as we saw in Tuesday's study. In Psalm 68:18, Jesus **first** goes to heaven after He wakes up from the dead. **Then** Jesus comes to the earth in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

2. The prisoners in Ephesians 4:8. In Ephesians 4:8, Paul uses part of a quote from Psalm 68:18: " 'When Christ [Jesus] went up to heaven he took those [people] he had won with him' " (Ephesians 4:8, WE). Who are those people that Jesus won? The Nlrv puts the verse this way: "he took many prisoners" (Ephesians 4:8, Nlrv). Many Seventh-day Adventists understand this verse to mean that Jesus took to heaven the group of people who woke up from the dead when He did (Matthew 27:51–53). Jesus offers this group of people as a gift to His Father when He arrives in heaven's courts (read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1022; *The Desire of Ages*, pages 785, 786). At the same time, Ephesians 4:8 also may mean that Jesus won the war against Satan and his evil angels (read Colossians 2:15). So, Satan and his evil angels are the same as Jesus' prisoners.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Compare the list of "spiritual gifts" in Ephesians 4:11 with the lists in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11, 27–30; Romans 12:4–8; and 1 Peter 4:10, 11. What things are the same about the lists? How are they different?
- ② Paul says that false teachings are the same as strong winds (Ephesians 4:14). Paul says that we shouldn't let these winds control us or destroy us. How can we protect ourselves and other church members from false teachings?
- ③ In Ephesians, Paul talks a lot about the need for peace and agreement in the church. Should we always agree with each other? Is there a time when agreeing is the wrong thing to do? If yes, explain why and when we shouldn't agree.

PART 4: A REAL OFFERING?

For a whole year, Almira prayed and read the Bible every night to keep the evil spirit away from her. Almira also went to church every Sabbath. Her parents, family members, and neighbors said mean things to her because she went to church. Some of them said they would hurt Almira if she kept going. The rest of Almira's life was the same as it was before she started going to church. Almira went to school on weekdays. She often went to parties and clubs with friends at nights and on the weekends.

At 18, Almira came to a difficult time in her Christian faith. She had a question she couldn't answer. Why did the Bible say that Jesus' death cost Him something? To Almira, Jesus' death didn't seem to cost Him anything at all. Yes, Jesus was nailed to the cross. But He knew He was going to wake up from the dead. So, why would He worry about death? When Almira compared her life to Jesus' life, she thought about all she suffered. Almira gave up the love of her parents, friends, and family members for Jesus. Almira had no idea how her story would end. So, she believed she made a bigger offering than Jesus.

Confused, Almira prayed for an answer. She said, "Jesus, I have read that I need to tell You about my worries, and You will answer. Here's my plan: I will read about Your life in the Bible, along with *The Desire of Ages* every day. Please show me what Your death on the cross really means."

Almira didn't really want to read the Bible or Ellen G. White's *The Desire of Ages*. But she forced herself to read both books every day. At first, Almira was bored. She didn't feel close to Jesus in her heart. She knew what her problem was. She worshiped on Sabbath, but she pleased herself during the week.

Finally, Almira found an answer. She read, "The Savior couldn't see what would happen after He died. He had no hope that He would wake up from the grave. Jesus didn't know that He won or that His Father accepted His offering. Jesus was afraid that God hated sin so much that He and God would be separated forever."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 753, adapted.

Almira believed this quote was an answer to her prayer. Jesus also had been afraid. But He was ready to risk His life for her. Just as Jesus didn't know how His story would end, Almira also didn't know how her story would end. But Jesus gave His life for her anyway. Almira was surprised by Jesus' love. She prayed, "Jesus, if no one else on earth follows You, I will follow You," she said. Almira decided to give her life to Jesus and get baptized.

Read more about Almira next week. Thank you for your offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in Russia and around the globe.

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



She prayed, "Jesus, if no one else on earth follows You, I will follow You," she said.

