



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 65

THE GIFT OF MEN

God gave men as gifts to help the church mature and grow.



MONDAY

THE STORY: EPHESIANS 4:1-6

As Christians we are called to live lives worthy of our calling. After spending the first three chapters of his letter teaching the Ephesians of the magnificence of Christ and the power of His grace, Paul turns to apply this teaching to their everyday lives. Paul tells them that as followers of Christ, they should make every effort to live in peace and kindness with one another. Sin divides, but Paul appeals for unity on the basis that all Christians share the same hope, the same faith, the same Spirit, the same baptism, and the same Lord.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why should Christians, of all people, be unified and at peace? (We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are from the same family.)

Do you remember the sin that caused arguments among the disciples? (They argued about who was the greatest.)

Where do you find arguments and division in your own family? (Parents, draw out your children. Then explain to them that the very same sins present in their lives can also affect people in the church. Ask them how Paul's encouragement to be humble, gentle, patient, and loving can help keep unity and avoid sinful division.)

PRAY:

Ask the Lord to help you all demonstrate humility, gentleness, patience, and love toward one another.



TUESDAY

THE STORY: EPHESIANS 4:7-14

God gave us men to help us grow and walk worthy of our calling. Paul was aware that the command to live in unity is not going to be easy. He announces that God has given each believer the grace needed to live in unity and that He has also given us gifts to help us. Paul goes on to explain that these gifts are actually leaders - specifically, apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.

The men called to these roles are given to the church to prepare God's people for service until we all reach unity and become mature in Christ. Until this happens, when we are with the Lord in heaven, God has given these ministries to the church.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What are the four kinds of leaders God has given to help us? (The four kinds of leaders are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers.)

How are you helped by these men in your local church? (Parents, review with your children how these ministries operate in your local church.)

PRAY:

Thank God for the good gifts of men He has given to help us until we are mature in Christ.



WEDNESDAY
WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

THE STORY: EPHESIANS 4:15,16

In Ephesians 4, Paul turns to the practical issue of obedience, but the cross remains at the center. Although we need to obey and help one another obey, we do it for Christ. Our fellowship is designed to help us grow up into Christ, “reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We do not obey to become Christians; we obey to become more like Christ!

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why should we try to live holy lives? (We live holy lives so that we can be more like Jesus, who saved us.)

What does it mean to speak truth in love? (Even though our goal is to avoid sinning, we are still sinners and we will still sin. Often we need others to help us know when we are straying from the path because we can be blind to our own wandering. When individuals correct us in love, using God’s Word, they are speaking the truth in love to us.)

Should you speak the truth in love to others in your family? (Yes, we should all welcome correction and be willing to offer loving correction, without anger, to each other.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help your family offer correction in love, without anger. And ask God to help you receive correction from members of your family.



THURSDAY

THE STORY: EPHESIANS 4:17-19

Live holy lives in the goodness of God's grace. After telling them of the grace of God and the gift ministries of men, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live holy lives. When he tells them to no longer live like the Gentiles, he means the unbelieving Gentiles who have hardened their hearts and lost their sensitivity. They have become so familiar with sin that they are no longer bothered in their conscience and have been completely given over to sin.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Is living for Christ optional or does Paul insist that we live for Christ? (Paul is firm: All Christians must not live like unbelievers.)

What are the unbelieving Gentiles doing wrong? (They are separated from the life of God. They are hardening their hearts and becoming desensitized to sin.)

Could this happen to us as believers? (Yes. If we stop spending time in God's Word or with other Christians, and harden our hearts, little by little we will compromise. Before we know it we are willfully sinning against God.)

What helps protect us from falling into sin? (We need to say "no" to sin and stay connected to other believers in the church. We need to encourage and help one another, speaking the truth in love. Knowing God's Word teaches us right from wrong and provides the help we need to avoid sinning. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.")

PRAY:

Ask God to help each member of your family grow in love for Christ and His church.



FRIDAY ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

THE STORY: PSALM 68:18

Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 and then he relates it to Christ. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:9 that if Jesus ascended, He must have descended. In Philippians 2:1-7, Paul tells us about Jesus descending to earth to become “nothing, taking the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” We know, of course, that Jesus ascended after His resurrection.

When Jesus left, he left victorious, having accomplished what He set out to do. He was victorious over His captives: Satan, sin, and death. The result of His victory is that He is able to give gifts to men. In Ephesians Paul uses this passage from Psalm 68 to speak of the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher.

TALK ABOUT IT:

How is Jesus’ example of “descending” a good example for us to follow? (See Philippians 2:5-8, where Paul tells us that we should have the same attitude as Christ, who humbled Himself and became a servant.)

What are the gifts we receive from Jesus, who has ascended? (In addition to the list in Ephesians 4:11, we could also say that we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.)

PRAY:

Thank the Lord for the gifts He has given us.