

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**December 16, 2012**

**Unity in the Body of Christ**

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

**Key verses:** “You are one body and one spirit just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5).

“Love,” wrote Eugene Peterson, “cannot exist in isolation: away from others, love bloats into pride. Grace cannot be received privately: cut off from others, it is perverted into greed. Hope cannot develop in solitude: separated from community, it goes to seed in the form of fantasies. No gift, no virtue can develop and remain healthy apart from the community of faith” (from Peterson’s *Reversed Thunder*).

In our brokenness, we gravitate toward self-centeredness and radical individualism. But spiritual health and wholeness comes only in community. So, Ephesians 4:1-16 is a call to unity, Christ-like service, and spiritual growth in the Body of Christ.

Unity in the Church requires of believers an “effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit” (4:3). The Holy Spirit gives us unity, but we must do our part to preserve it. We do our part to “preserve the unity” when we treat fellow believers with “humility, gentleness, and patience” and as we “accept each other in love” (4:2). That means loving one another and accepting one another “warts and all”!

Living together in a community of faith also requires focusing on what unites us and binds us together rather than on what divides us. Believers are united by our “one Lord,” our “one faith,” our “one baptism,” and our “one God” (4:5). Focus on what unites us in Christ, not on what divides us.

In the Body of Christ, each believer is given unique gifts and abilities with which to serve Christ and build up the Body (4:7-12). The goal of our service and the purpose of our spiritual gifts is that we may help one another and help the whole Church “become mature” and whole in Christ (4:13-16).

Living in community, preserving unity in the Church, growing together in Christ—this is the path to wholeness. Sometimes it seems too difficult, and we are tempted to break apart into isolation and self-centeredness. But Peterson is right—spiritual health and growth cannot develop apart from a community of faith. So, Peterson concludes: “Outside the Church there is no

salvation' is not ecclesiastical arrogance but spiritual common sense,  
confirmed in everyday experience."

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