

# Unity, Diversity, and the Trinity

## Blueprint: God's Design for the Church

Ephesians 4:4-10

Good morning. Well, I'm filling in for Ricky. He texted me this morning and he just wanted all of us to know that it's eighty degrees where he is right now. But we definitely need to be praying for them as they have made it safely to Nicaragua, and we also need to continue to pray for our pastor as well as soon as he gets back from Nicaragua; a few days later he'll be leaving for Brazil for another RBBI. So as we begin this morning, we want to keep Bro Ricky and Bro Kory in prayer, and the Nicaragua team in prayer, and also be praying for Bro Ricky as well. He will be back next Sunday but then a couple of days right after that he'll be taking off for Brazil. We're going to be continuing on in the sermon series in Ephesians this morning.

As I was thinking through my text, I thought about some family devotion time we have had this past week in our household. Brandi and I have time where we read a few stories and we read some Scripture to the kids and sing songs, but in the midst of this Scripture time, we were talking about how Jesus is praying to God, the Father. So my five-year-old Graham, my four-year-old Brax, and two-year-old Hannah were all on the couch. The wheels started turning a little bit and Graham and Brax were thinking about how Jesus prays to God. The next question is that, is Jesus man, or is Jesus God? Well, He's both. Well, wait a second, God lives forever, right, but we just got done celebrating Jesus' birthday. How can Jesus have a birthday if He's lived forever? So all these questions started developing about Jesus being God or man, how can Jesus be God and then pray to God? That doesn't make sense if we only have one God. I basically said well really, when it comes down to it, we serve a triune God. We serve Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-three-but three form one, three in one. I

remember asking Graham, does that make sense? Nope, it's confusing, right, whether you're five or fifty-five, the Trinity is hard to grasp. Things about God are hard to grasp. We wrestle with who God is for all of our lives. I was thinking through that time with my three children. What do I want them to learn about the Trinity? I want them to learn about their salvation, the role of the Father, the role of the Son, and the role Holy Spirit in their own salvation. But not only do I want them to understand that, I pray for my children to come to Christ. But as they come to Christ, the more they understand the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the more they will be unified serving one God. But yet by understanding who God is that this one God is diverse with unique and different roles that my three children will be able to be unified, but yet free to be diversified in their roles and gifts. Does it make sense? If you get that point, you've got the entire sermon; that by knowing who our God is, we should be unified, but by knowing who our God is, we should see that each and every single one of us have gifts from God that are different, and we are called to use those gifts for the equipping of the body and for His name. That's what I think Paul is trying to communicate this morning as we turn to Ephesians 4:4-10.

### **Scripture**

***"There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,***

***"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,  
and he gave gifts to men."***

***(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)"***

(Prayer)

Father, we come to You right now and we ask that we truly see that we are unified, and yet you have given each one of us gifts. Father, let's be convicted and challenged to be unified at Hardin Baptist Church for Your name, and let's be convicted and challenged to truly see how we are called to be used in each and individual, unique ways. Father, we love You and ask these things in Jesus name, amen.

As we think about being unified and diversified in the context of the church, as Paul addresses this issue in Ephesians, I think it's important to remember the context about what's going on in this letter. There are two groups of people and there is tension. Just recently we just got done with a college football season, and a couple of weeks ago I was watching some of the games. The first game was Auburn and they were playing University of Central Florida. Then the game after that was Georgia and Oklahoma. So they had a commercial right in between those two games. It was Auburn fans and Georgia fans and it was Chick-fil-a, that's how it started out. You heard these Auburn fans talking about how much they love Auburn and they don't like Georgia. Then you had the other side, the Georgia fans and the rivalry and you've got to pick one. You're either an Auburn fan or a Georgia fan. The commercial was going about how you bring about Auburn fans and Georgia fans. So what Chick-fil-a did in the commercial, they built this Chick-fil-a right on the Alabama and Georgia line, so on the Alabama side were Auburn fans and on the Georgia side were Georgia fans. But all of them were eating, united, why? They were eating Chick-fil-a sandwiches. The whole thought was that you had these two groups of fans that do not like each other at all, but because of Chick-fil-a being right on the two state lines, they are now coming together eating sandwiches.

Now, as we think through that, I think that commercial hits on a nerve in our culture and society today. We are desperately wanting diverse groups of people to come together and be unified. When we turn to Ephesians, we had that same issue coming about. What will unite these people will not be a Chick-fil-a sandwich. It has to be someone that is so much more powerful. You see, we need to understand the tension that is going on. Jews and Gentiles have now come together to form this church. Jews and Gentiles do not like each other. There was one story I read a while back

about there is a Jewish teaching that if you see a Gentile woman giving birth, keep on walking, let the woman and her baby die. It's just out of pure hatred for each other. Can you imagine what it's like to be a Gentile? Here you are, you come in this church, and what you eat the Jews do not like. In fact, the thought of what you eat just makes them sick to their stomach. Here you come in with a BBQ sandwich or BBQ sauce on your mouth and it absolutely disgusts them. You come in and read the Old Testament and you are always the bad guy. The Jews, they are David and you are Goliath. Their ancestors, they're the chosen ones. Your ancestors are always enemies of God. And yet, through this division, through these issues, Paul is calling these two groups of people to come together as one. How does this happen? By knowing all of the truths in Ephesians 1, 2, and 3, they now can be unified. Paul gives seven 'one' statements to talk about how they are unified.

1. One body
2. One Spirit
3. One hope
4. One Lord
5. One faith
6. One baptism
7. One God and Father of all

If you look at those seven statements, what do we learn about who God is in those seven statements? We see the Trinity. In those seven statements, what do we see? We see one Spirit, one Lord, and we see one Father, who is over everything. I think that's what truly unites the church, our hope, our faith, and our baptism, how we form one body all has to do with one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father. If you go back to Ephesians 4:3, it talks about how the church should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You see, that's what connects us when we see the first part of the Trinity. We see the Holy Spirit. We learn in Ephesians 1:13 that no matter how different we might be, we are all sealed with the one Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit, is living in each and every single believer and that one Holy Spirit unites us in such a way that we have peace. It unites us in such a way that every single member becomes one body, connected.

Now, the thought is how do we become one body? Ephesians 3:1, Paul talks about how he is a prisoner for Christ. Ephesians 4:1, Paul calls himself a prisoner for the Lord. The thought there is as if Paul is in physical chains for the name of Jesus. The reason he's in physical chains is because he's spiritually chained to Christ. He's spiritually enslaved to Christ.

So too now, just as we have that one Spirit, we are now chained together, forming one body. And that one body, when we are really coming together as one, by the power of the Holy Spirit it gives us hope. It gives us hope, which leads to the next statement. We all have one hope. When you read Ephesians 4:4, we see in this passage hope and calling go hand in hand together. We don't just have hope we are called to hope. Ephesians 1:18, if you read there, again, hope and calling go hand in hand again.

Another question is; this one body that has one Spirit, what's our hope? What's our hope? What's the hope that we have been called to? If you read the next one, it is one Lord. When you read the Ephesians 1 passage, what's the hope and calling in Ephesians 1:18, and if you go down to a few other verses it's basically talking about how everything will be under the feet of Christ, that Christ is the head and the body will be connected to the head. The entire body will be under the head. That is our hope. In our culture today, we are always looking for someone or something to put our hope in. We look everywhere for this. The problem with our hope is no matter what we put our hope in there's always doubt. We can go on vacation and we can hope the weather is good, but the weather might not be good. We can go root for a basketball team, or football, and no matter how good the team might be or how much we hope they might win, there's still doubt, and they might lose. We might put our hope in a politician that he or she will do what they say they will do, but there's still doubt whether they will do it or not. We can go through every single situation, we can hope in this, in a restaurant, in a move, we can hope in so many different things that they will fulfill and meet the promise that they are supposed to do. The problem is that in each and every single earthly thing we put our hope in, eventually that person or that thing will let us down. But with Jesus, the difference with Jesus is that there's no

doubt. There's no doubt in our hope that when we put our hope and trust in Christ, He will never, ever let us down.

When you think back to the Old Testament and God spoke to Abraham and made promises, did He not; promises that Abraham would have a land, promises that Abraham would have an offspring, and Abraham's offspring would be blessed and bless the world. In Genesis chapter 22 when you look at that story, Abraham was called to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At the same time, in this difficult step of faith, how was Abraham able to go up on that mount with his son, how? He's able to remember the promises of God. He's able to remember the Word of God, and he has hope that God will be faithful to His Word; that even if he sacrifices his son that God would raise him from the dead because of what God's Word has said. Then when you continue you on that same promise, that Joseph at the end of Genesis, what happens to Joseph? He dies. Here again, we start in Genesis with creation, but by the end we have death. But there's still hope. What does Joseph say? He wants his bones taken where, to the Promise Land. So here in the midst of death, Joseph still has hope. Why? He remembers God's Word and he has hope that God will be faithful to His Word. When you look at Joshua finally getting ready to enter the Promise Land, he's getting ready to have this big fight in battle, what was Joshua's hope even though he has fear? What does God say to Joshua? Fear not, why, for I am with you. Joshua is able to go into the Promise Land and take it. Why? Because he remembers God's Word. He remembers God's promises, and by holding onto those promises, he now has hope that God will be with him. God will be faithful and God will do what He says He will do.

It is the same for us with Christ. II Corinthians 1:20 says all the promises find their yes in Him. By knowing what Christ has done for us, the death, burial, and resurrection, by Him paying the price for us on the cross, by Him being our ransom, by knowing and remembering His Word, and in John 1, He is the Word of God, by putting our faith and trust in the cross, we have hope. Hope in what? Hope that He is coming back. That's our hope, that no matter how bad your situation might be right now in life, no matter how bad the family situation might be, no matter how bad the economic situation might be, no matter how bad your health might be, no

matter how concerned the direction of the country might be going, or the world might be going, no matter what is going on in the news, no matter how bad it might be, we have hope, hope without doubt! Why? Because Christ is coming back! By understanding that and by knowing that, our hope is unshakable. When we have that hope, no matter how different we might be, we are united because we all have one faith in our Lord Jesus. That's a picture of our baptism.

One baptism, it is just a picture of our salvation. Here we have one Spirit, we follow one Lord, and every single time we see someone get baptized, this is just a picture of what's going on. I get a bad rap for my baptisms. If you're in the 9:15 service, as my college students can attest, I have a tendency to dunk rather hard. If I have three or four baptisms, I hear the laughter after I get done. The screen comes up and I'll baptize three or four and some water will come over. Ok, I get it; people say you really got dunked when you get dunked from Christ. I've heard that. With that in mind, if I had it my way, (a bunch of college students are going to be scared right now hearing me say this) I would dunk even harder. I would! We need to see and understand the picture of our one baptism. 1 Peter 3 compares baptism with Noah and the flood. What happened to Noah in the flood? Noah was saved on that boat. What happened to everybody else? They were under the water. They were under the wrath of God. 1 Corinthians 10 talks about Moses going through the sea as a type of baptism. What happened to Moses and the Israelites? They went through that sea. What happened to Pharaoh's army? The water came crushing down on Pharaoh's army. They were under the wrath of God. But what has God done to us? We need to understand that each and every single one of us, no matter what our background, no matter what our family dynamic, no matter what our sin, each and every single one of us are like Pharaoh and his army, chasing after God's people, being enemies to God's people. Each and every single one of us is rebelling against God like everybody else that drowned in the flood. Each and every single one of us, without Christ, is dead at the bottom of the ocean floor, under the wrath of God! Ephesians 2; we are spiritually dead, sons of disobedience, but what has God done because of His great mercy? He has taken a bunch of dead, wretched sinners and made us alive. He has gone to the bottom of the sea,

He has gone to the bottom of the ocean floor, He has put us on the boat, He has put us on the Promised Land, and He has now made us fellow citizens and heirs of His Kingdom forever! And it's all because of what Christ has done. When we understand what's going on when someone comes to Christ, when we see someone get baptized, we now understand no matter how old, no matter how young, no matter what the background might be that there's an identity change. No matter what their earthly identity is, our bond with them is stronger. Why? Because we have a heavenly identity. Every time we see someone coming out of the waters, that's just a picture that now we have a new brother or sister in Christ. That one baptism is just a complete picture of our one faith and our one Lord, now we have a new member that's going to make our body stronger, and that one member has the same one Spirit that we do as well. That unites us, no matter how divided from an earthly standpoint, those truths unite us. Here's what's amazing; it's all the part of God, the Father's, plan. God, the one Father, who is over all; that's all part of His plan. When we as a congregation realize that every single believer has one Spirit, we follow one Lord, and that's all a part of our one Father's plan for us, we can't help but worship Him, together, corporately, united.

But it gets better. This God, the Father, who has given us His Holy Spirit, this God, the Father, who has raised His Son from the dead so that you and I might experience eternal life, has given each and every single one of us gifts. Just as the Trinity is united, yet diversified, that's what He wants His body to look like, united, yet diversified. If you look in Ephesians 4:7, there's a little bit of a tone difference. He goes from saying 'one, one, one, one,' and now he says 'each one of us.' The grace was given to 'each' one of us. He makes it individual. How is grace given? It is all based on the measure of Christ's gift. Verses 8-10 summarize Psalm 68 and it's talking about how Christ ascended and descended to the lower parts. Here's the point I would try to make on those verses. Christ has descended. He descended to death, for you and me. By descending to death, He defeated death. By defeating death, He has been raised from the dead and now has power over everything. By Him having power over everything, He is able to give us the Holy Spirit. The gospel of John says by Christ defeating death, the Holy Spirit is not just with us, but in us, and that same Holy Spirit that's

in us gives us spiritual gifts. Each and every single one of us, by the grace of God, has spiritual gifts.

So the thought is when we get this, church, is this. All these one statements; we're unified; we're unified, together as one body. It should be more powerful than anything the world has to offer, and yet we're diversified because each and every single one of us has a gift. We understand that oneness and diversity, the world should understand how we serve one God that's got three heads. The question is how can we take this and make application out of it? How can we go to the ground surface and really try to think through what this should look like for you and me? You can be saying ok, Chris, I get it that we serve one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I get we need to be united. I get that each and every single one of us has gifts. The question is, so now what; what do I do with that?

I think there are three questions that need to be asked. Analyze your heart through this process.

1. Are you an employee or are you a customer at Hardin Baptist Church?

I have my parents in the front row. They ran a Dairy Queen in Vienna, IL, for eight years. My mom and dad ran it, my brother and his wife worked there. They worked and did great, and I will confess that I never worked a day in that Dairy Queen my entire life, but I was a good customer. I loved me some Dairy Queen, and because I knew the employees and employer, guess what. The price was right. I could go in there; ice cream cone, yep. I could critique those ice cream cones, and I liked those ice cream cones. Chocolate sundaes, the hot dogs, cheeseburgers, I can tell you even at certain times of the year when they had the shrimp basket, I can tell you all these different things. I can breakdown the employees, I can breakdown what the restaurant looked like, I can tell you anything and everything, and as a customer, I liked getting fed there all the time and the price was good for me. But do you know what; I didn't help that place grown at all. I liked it, but I didn't help it grow. Do you know who helped it grow? The employees. I saw employees, a diverse group of employees,

young and old, some that were teenagers, and some that had been working there for years upon years, having different gifts, do different things. They had to be kind to unkind people. They had to do things behind the scenes. I saw them flip burgers. I saw them sweep the floor. I saw them clean tables. I saw them take money. All these different groups of people, that were different in many different ways, were coming together, being unified, to help the organization grow.

That's a picture of the church. The question is; are you a customer right now? A customer could come to Hardin Baptist Church and you can get fed. You can come here every single Sunday, and you can just get fed by Bro Ricky, or Bro Kory, or whoever is preaching and teaching and you can get fed. You can get your belly full, and you can get your mind full, theological truth, every single week. You can go to each Sunday school class and say I can get fed, and have all this truth just given to you. I get fed. I get fed. And you can love the church and say this, and tell this about Bro Ricky, about Kory, about the staff, about the Sunday school teachers, about the building, and about the worship. You can do all these different things, but you're just a customer. But an employee is different. An employee is ready to get their hands dirty. An employee says I am tied to this organization. An employee says I am ready to be kind to unkind people, to represent this church. I'm ready to do things behind the scenes to help this church grow. I'm ready to serve in any way possible. I'm ready to use my gifts to help this church grow. I'm coming in here not as someone special, but understanding my identity in Christ, I'm ready to serve. I want to get fed, sure, but I want to serve. I want to serve. Now the next question has to be asked if you are an employee.

## 2. Are you full-time or part-time?

One of the things I think that happens in the church, we can look at and say, well, (I've seen two extremes here) throughout the week I'm doing this and this, and because I'm doing these things, Sunday morning is time for me to be fed and relax, just chill. It's time for me to be taken care of. There are other people with other extremes that say, you know what, on Sunday morning I do this and this and this, and I do this and this and this, and because I do this on Sunday morning, the rest of the week I've already

done my part. No, it's not about doing this and this and this. It's not about doing something on Sunday or throughout the week. It's a walk. We don't earn our gifts; they are by the grace of God. We don't earn our salvation; it's by the grace of God. It becomes a lifestyle. Because of who God is, we want to use our gifts. We want to serve, not only on Sunday morning, but through the entire week.

What I love about short-term mission trips is that you see this picture here. You see different groups of people just ready to serve. Every mission trip I've been on, sometimes, I have a construction team, we have an evangelism team, we'll have a Vacation Bible School team, we'll be preaching/teaching and you'll have all these people doing all these different things. Some will be building something. Some will be sharing their faith. Some will be doing a Bible study. Some will be hanging out with kids. Some will be cooking. Some will be doing all these different things that are going on. What I love about the Hardin Baptist mission team is that all the time people just want the name of Jesus to be glorified. I think back to my Arizona trip. So many times, I've been on these trips and I have a construction group. I've got David, Ryan, and these different people and I'll go up to them in the morning and ask how many people they need on the construction team. They will say they will take whatever, but love their response every single time; "Yes, we can do this and this and this, but we want them to hear Jesus. If someone needs to go share Jesus with somebody, we'll get this taken care of ourselves; let them go do it." The focus is not on them, the focus is on the glory of the Lord. The focus is on having others know who Jesus is. Here you have, again, this diverse group of people unified for the glory of God. That should become our lifestyle.

I have a friend from another church that's got a small group, and I love hearing what they're doing right now, that every single week they do something different. They have one guy who is really good at construction, some of the guys aren't, but he's good at construction. One week in this neighborhood, they just do some construction work, maybe they build a wheelchair ramp, maybe they build a swing set, but together as a small group, once a month they come together and build something or do some type of service project in the neighborhood. The next week, they just have

hospitality. They have some people who love to cook and have a big house, so they just open up their house and invite neighbors in. the third week, they have a Bible study. They have some people in there who really love to teach the word. The fourth week they just hang out together. All four weeks are completely different. All four weeks, different people are stepping up doing different things. They have different gifts and different talents. Yet, all four weeks, they are just one. They're unified for the name of Jesus.

That's what we should be. That's what we are called to be, not just employees, but full-time employees who are so in love with the Lord that we are ready to use our gifts. This leads me to the third question of thinking about our spiritual gifts.

### 3. Are you sold out?

Sometimes in church circles, we can be asking what my spiritual gift is. We can do a spiritual gift inventory and all these different things about what a spiritual gift is and what a natural gift is. Do you know what I find? When people are really in love with someone or some thing, they somehow just use their gifts. They don't have to go find them. They just use them. If they don't have the gift, they develop it if they love someone or some thing. I've worked with college students for a long time and one of the things I have noticed is that when a young man starts having a crush on a young lady, do you know what happens? He finds out he's got some gifts. All of a sudden, that young man has a gift of hospitality that he can host that young lady. All of a sudden, that young man knows how to study the text, maybe not the biblical text, but he can breakdown the text message. He can parse it, he can breakdown word for word what each word is saying. He can study it. That young man has the gift of encouragement. All of a sudden, this young man who was sarcastic all of the time is saying these nice and encouraging things to this young lady. It's amazing how that works out! Why? Because he wants the affections of that young lady.

When we think about teams and sports, sometimes, we get superstitious and we think if we wear this sweatshirt, if we sit in this chair, if we do these different things, our team will win. Think about that! Do we really

believe that we are that powerful that if we sit in this chair or wear this shirt, we can actually influence a game that's hundreds of miles away, in which we don't know any of the athletes at all on a personal basis, because we have the gift of wearing this shirt, we can sit in this chair, we just have an influence on the game? That's crazy! That's foolish! We're called fans, and fans stands for fanatic! Fanatical, you're crazy; I'm crazy! Why do we do those things? Because we so love the team that if we could do anything at all to help influence the team reach their goal, we are willing to do it. We are willing to do it even if it makes us look like a fool.

That should be us with the church that we are so in love with God that we are ready to look like a fool. I can go to these first things about telling you to do this, this, and this and you can feel condemned and beat up. I know I'm a customer and I need to be an employee, and you can feel condemned. You can think I know I'm more part-time than full-time, and you can feel condemned. That's not what we're wanting here. What we're wanting here is you so in love with the Lord that it doesn't lead to condemnation, but it leads to conviction. By knowing who He is you are ready to be sold out, sold out to the church, and sold out to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You just want to be used. You don't care how, whether it's on Sunday morning or throughout the week, you just want to give glory to God. You want this body to be united to the glory of God. You want to use your gifts in whatever capacity you can use for the glory of God. Are you ready? Are you sold out? You don't care what the Lord calls you to do, even if you look like a fool, you just want to help this body grow.

As a think through this passage and the illustration of using my children and wonder if it is a really good illustration or not, I think it is. If you continue to read on in this chapter, you'll learn that God has given men, elders, leaders, and what are those elders and leaders who have special gifts called to do? They are called to equip the church. What does Paul talk about? What's the goal? It is so the church won't be like children. They will grow in their faith. They won't be tossed to and fro, no matter what comes their way, they will be able to stand firm in unity and love based on who Christ is. That's what we want for every single one of those kids at First

Fruits Farms, is it not; that no matter what the world throws at them, no matter how bad that might be, they might be unified for the gospel and they will be diversified in how they use their gifts. That's a challenge for us as well. No matter what comes our way in our world, we would be absolutely unified in the gospel, and yet have the freedom to so lose ourselves in the gospel that we are willing to do whatever it takes for the name of Jesus to be spread.

Where are you this morning? My prayer is your heart, in Ephesians 1, 2, and 3, has fallen more in love with God. And by falling more in love with God, in the weeks to come as we get more into application, you want this body to grow. You want this body to grow so badly that you're ready to serve in any form or capacity to make this body grow. In the process, you truly give worship to God, the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Let us worship the Father's design of sending His Son on a cross and giving us His Spirit and spiritual gifts for the glory and edification of the body in His name.