

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build (Eph 4:1-16) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build (Eph 4:1-16), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Dan Darko's lecture, the twenty-sixth session in his series on the Prison Epistles, focuses on **Ephesians 4:1-16**, titled "United We Build." The lecture explores **Paul's emphasis on unity within the church**, highlighting shared spiritual foundations and the importance of maintaining this unity. **Darko examines the seven commonalities** Paul outlines and discusses the debated meaning of "one baptism." He further analyzes **Christ's gifts to the church**, specifically apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and their role in equipping believers for ministry and building up the body of Christ to achieve spiritual maturity and unity in faith. The lecture concludes with a call for listeners to **actively pursue this unity** in their local congregations.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → Prison Epistles).



Darko_PrisonEp_Session26.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build (Eph 4:1-16)

Briefing Document: Dr. Daniel K. Darko on Ephesians 4:1-16 - "United We Build"

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Darko's lecture (Session 26) on Ephesians 4:1-16, titled "United We Build." The lecture focuses on Paul's emphasis on the **spirit of unity** that God desires and expects within the church and the practical and theological foundations for achieving and maintaining this unity. Dr. Darko meticulously examines the key elements of this passage, including the seven commonalities that bind believers, the meaning and significance of "one baptism," and the purpose and role of the diverse gifts Christ bestows upon the church.

Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

1. The Foundational Importance of Unity:

- Dr. Darko highlights that Paul's writing in Ephesians consistently emphasizes the **spirit of unity** within the church. He notes that Paul transitions from the theological exposition in the earlier chapters to the ethical implications in chapter 4, beginning with a call to maintain this unity.
- Paul urges believers to "do everything in your power to maintain this unity" (implied from the discussion of Ephesians 4:1-3).
- Dr. Darko underscores that this unity is "of the spirit and must be kept in that bond of unity."

2. Seven Commonalities as the Basis for Unity (Ephesians 4:4-6):

- Paul provides a powerful basis for unity by listing seven shared elements among believers, each prefaced with "one" to emphasize oneness:
- **One body:** "There is one body, namely the body of Christ." This includes both Jews and Gentiles.
- **One spirit:** "There is one spirit. They all share that. They were all sealed by the Holy Spirit."
- **One hope:** They are "called to the one hope that belongs to your call" and are "sharers of the promises" with an inheritance.
- **One Lord:** "One Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the means by which Jews and Gentiles have become one."

- **One faith:** "One belief, one shared common foundational doctrine. Jesus Christ came to die for sinners such as us."
- **One baptism:** This is a point of detailed discussion (see below).
- **One God and Father of all:** "There is one God who is the father of all. We are one family."

3. The Complexities of "One Baptism":

- Dr. Darko delves into the meaning of "one baptism," acknowledging the ongoing scholarly debate.
- He clarifies that while "baptism" literally means "immersion," its application and understanding in the early church and in Paul's writing are nuanced.
- He notes the discrepancy between baptism by immersion and other forms like sprinkling, raising the question of whether differing practices undermine the "one baptism."
- Dr. Darko refers to the **Didache (Article 7)** as early evidence of prescribed variations in baptismal practices (warming water, using pooled water, pouring water on the head) alongside the primary method of immersion.
- He suggests that "one baptism" might refer to the shared experience of **Christian initiation, conversion, or a cleansing ritual** in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rather than solely the mode of administration.
- He dismisses the idea that it solely refers to baptism of the Spirit in this context, as the surrounding verses emphasize general unity and shared foundational elements.
- He acknowledges the ambiguity in other Pauline uses of "baptism" in contexts like 1 Corinthians 12-13 (baptism into one body by one Spirit) and Galatians 3:26-28 (baptized into Christ, putting on Christ), noting that these passages, while highlighting unity, don't definitively clarify the mode of baptism in Ephesians 4.

4. Christ as the Gift Giver (Ephesians 4:7-10):

- Dr. Darko emphasizes that **grace is given to each member** of the community according to Christ's gift.
- He analyzes the quotation in Ephesians 4:8 ("When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and gave gifts to men") in relation to its likely source, Psalm 68:18 ("You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train, and receiving gifts among men").
- He points out key differences in the wording (2nd person vs. 3rd person, singular "man" vs. plural "men," "receiving" vs. "gave") and discusses how Paul might be reworking the psalm for his purposes.
- He explores interpretations of the "lower regions, the earth" (Ephesians 4:9), including:
 - The underworld (Hades), where Jesus conquered evil forces. This interpretation resonates with the religious context of Ephesus and Western Asia Minor, where underworld deities like Hecate were worshipped. Dr. Darko leans towards this view, citing scholars like Clint Arnold.
 - The incarnation and death of Christ (though this view has interpretive challenges regarding the order of descent and ascent).
 - The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (though Dr. Darko cautions against reading too much into this contextually).
- The overall purpose of this section is to depict **Christ as the victorious and all-powerful Lord** who has conquered all powers and now distributes gifts to his people.

5. Equipping the Saints Through Diverse Gifts (Ephesians 4:11-16):

- Christ gave specific gifts: **apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors), and teachers.** **Apostles:** Likely refers to foundational leaders like Paul and the early disciples.
- **Prophets:** Refers to contemporary (to Paul) individuals inspired by the Spirit to speak for the edification of the church, not soothsayers or those revealing trivial personal details.
- **Evangelists:** Individuals equipped to preach the gospel from place to place (e.g., Philip, Timothy).

- **Shepherds (Pastors) and Teachers:** This is a potentially unified role or closely linked gifts, indicated by a single article in Greek. Pastors are likened to shepherds who guide and care for the flock, often involving instruction. Dr. Darko suggests some individuals may possess both gifts, while others may excel in one more than the other.
- The **purpose of these gifts** is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."
- Dr. Darko discusses two main views on the equipping process:
- **Priesthood of all believers:** All individuals are gifted and equipped for service. Ephesians 4:12 suggests the saints are being equipped for works of service.
- **Leadership-driven equipping:** The gifted leaders (apostles, prophets, etc.) are the primary equippers of the saints. This view aligns with certain church structures.
- Dr. Darko favors a view where those with specific gifts do the equipping, but this should not establish a rigid power structure, as those being equipped may also discover and utilize their own gifts.
- The **ultimate goals of this equipping** are:
- **Unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God:** This is a recurrent theme for Paul, emphasizing the importance of shared belief and understanding for maintaining unity.
- **Mature manhood (maturity):** Believers should grow in knowledge and experience to avoid being easily swayed by false teachings ("children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes").
- **The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:** The body of Christ should reflect the complete personhood of Christ, with all parts functioning together in unity and diversity (alluding to 1 Corinthians 12).
- **Growing up in every way into Christ, who is the head:** The whole body, joined and held together by every joint, grows as each part works properly.
- **Building itself up in love:** Love is the essential element in the growth and unity of the body of Christ.

Conclusion:

Dr. Darko concludes by reiterating Paul's central message: the church is meant to be one, built on shared foundational truths and sustained by the active participation of every member, empowered by the diverse gifts bestowed by the victorious Christ. The leaders with specific gifts have a particular responsibility to equip the saints for ministry, ultimately leading to a mature and unified body of Christ that reflects the fullness of Christ and operates in love. Dr. Darko encourages listeners to personally embrace this vision of unity in their own churches and lives.

Quotes:

- "Coming back to what Paul is doing in Ephesians should always remind us about the spirit of unity God desires and expects in his church."
- "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..." (Ephesians 4:4-6, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and gave gifts to man." (Ephesians 4:8, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, for whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:12-13, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "...so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." (Ephesians 4:14, quoted by Dr. Darko)
- "United we build." (Title of the session, reflecting a key theme)

4. Study Guide: Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build (Eph 4:1-16)

Study Guide: Ephesians 4:1-16 - United We Build

Key Themes:

- **Unity of the Spirit:** The foundational principle for the church, to be diligently maintained.
- **Common Ground:** The seven "ones" that believers share, providing the basis for unity.
- **Christ's Gifts:** The ascended Christ bestows diverse gifts upon the church.
- **Equipping the Saints:** The purpose of gifted individuals is to prepare all believers for ministry.
- **Building Up the Body:** The collective goal of the church is to grow and mature in Christ.
- **Maturity in Christ:** Growing beyond childish instability to a firm understanding of truth.
- **Interconnectedness:** The body of Christ functions through the proper working of each part in love.

Key Concepts:

- **Doxology:** An expression of praise, as seen at the end of Ephesians 3.
- **Ethics:** Moral principles that should guide the church's behavior in maintaining unity.
- **Seven "Ones":** One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.
- **Baptism:** A point of discussion regarding its meaning (immersion vs. broader initiation) and significance for unity.
- **Ascension and Descent of Christ:** The theological basis for Christ's authority to give gifts. Various interpretations exist (underworld conquest, incarnation, Pentecost).

- **Gifts (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds/Pastors, Teachers):** Specific roles given by Christ for the edification and building up of the church.
- **Equipping (Katasmōs):** Preparing the saints for works of service (diakonia).
- **Priesthood of All Believers:** The concept that all Christians have direct access to God and can participate in ministry.
- **Mature Manhood (Andros Teleios):** The state of spiritual maturity and stability in Christ.
- **Fullness of Christ (Metron tes Helikias Tou Pleromatos Tou Christou):** The complete measure of Christ's stature reflected in the church.
- **Unity in Diversity:** The idea that the church is one body with many different gifts and functions.
- **Winds of Doctrine:** False teachings that can destabilize immature believers.

Study Questions to Consider:

- What is the significance of Paul beginning this section of Ephesians with an emphasis on unity?
- How do the seven "ones" contribute to the understanding and practice of unity in the church?
- What are the different interpretations of Christ's descent into the "lower regions, the earth"? What is the significance of this event for the giving of gifts?
- What are the roles of the various gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds/pastors, teachers) in the church? How do they contribute to equipping the saints?
- What is the relationship between the gifted individuals and the rest of the believers in building up the body of Christ?
- What are the characteristics of spiritual maturity that Paul desires for the Ephesian church? How does this relate to resisting false teachings?
- How does the analogy of the body of Christ illustrate the importance of each member functioning properly in love?

Quiz: Ephesians 4:1-16

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3, what is the desired spirit within the church, and how should believers strive to maintain it?
2. List three of the seven commonalities that Paul highlights as the basis for unity in the church in Ephesians 4:4-6.
3. What are the different perspectives discussed regarding the meaning of "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5?
4. According to Dr. Darko, what is the significance of Paul quoting or alluding to Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 regarding Christ's ascension?
5. Describe one interpretation of what the "lower regions, the earth" might refer to in Ephesians 4:9.
6. List three of the specific gifts that Christ gave to the church as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.
7. According to one view discussed, who are the ones being equipped for the work of ministry according to Ephesians 4:12, and what is the purpose of this equipping?
8. What is the ultimate goal of the equipping of the saints as stated in Ephesians 4:13?
9. What is the contrast Paul draws between mature believers and children in Ephesians 4:14?
10. According to Ephesians 4:15-16, how should the body of Christ grow and build itself up?

Answer Key: Ephesians 4:1-16 Quiz

1. The desired spirit is one of unity, to be maintained with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, and being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Believers should exert effort and focus on these relational qualities to preserve this unity.
2. Three of the seven commonalities are: one body (the body of Christ), one Spirit (the Holy Spirit who seals believers), and one hope (the inheritance and promises of God). Other possibilities include one Lord (Jesus Christ), one faith (shared foundational doctrine), one baptism (Christian initiation), and one God and Father of all.

3. One perspective suggests "one baptism" refers to baptism by immersion as practiced in the early church, while another proposes it refers more broadly to baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a common Christian initiation. Some scholars even suggest it could allude to Spirit baptism or the union with Christ.
4. The allusion to Psalm 68:18 depicts Christ as a victorious king who has ascended on high after conquering his enemies and leading captives, and from this position of victory, he bestows gifts upon humanity. This highlights Christ's power and authority to distribute spiritual gifts.
5. One interpretation is that the "lower regions, the earth" refers to the underworld or Hades, where Jesus descended to conquer the forces of evil before his resurrection and ascension. Another view sees it as a reference to Christ's incarnation and death, his descent into our world.
6. Three of the gifts mentioned are apostles (foundational leaders like Paul and the early disciples), prophets (those speaking by the Spirit for the edification of the church), and evangelists (those who preach the gospel in various places). The other two are shepherds/pastors and teachers.
7. One view, aligned with the priesthood of all believers, suggests that the saints themselves are being equipped for works of service (ministry) to build up the body of Christ. This perspective emphasizes the active participation of all believers in the church's growth.
8. The ultimate goal is that all believers will attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, signifying spiritual maturity and completeness in Christ.
9. Paul contrasts mature believers, who are stable and not easily swayed by false teachings, with children who are tossed to and fro by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, highlighting the vulnerability of immaturity.
10. The body of Christ should grow up in every way into Christ, the head, with the whole body being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with each part working properly, causing the body to grow and build itself up in love.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the significance of unity as presented in Ephesians 4:1-16. Analyze the theological foundations Paul lays for this unity and explain its practical implications for the life and function of the church.
2. Examine the concept of Christ's gifts to the church as outlined in Ephesians 4:7-11. Analyze the different gift roles mentioned and discuss their purpose in equipping the saints and building up the body of Christ.
3. Explore the various interpretations of Christ's descent into the "lower regions, the earth" (Ephesians 4:9) and analyze how each interpretation contributes to the understanding of Christ's authority and his ability to give gifts to the church.
4. Analyze the relationship between the gifted individuals and the rest of the believers in Ephesians 4:12-16. Discuss the different perspectives on who is being equipped and how this equipping contributes to the church's growth towards maturity in Christ.
5. Discuss the characteristics of spiritual maturity that Paul emphasizes in Ephesians 4:13-16. Analyze how this maturity protects believers from false teachings and contributes to the healthy growth and interconnectedness of the body of Christ in love.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Apostle:** In this context, likely refers to foundational leaders in the early church, such as the original disciples and Paul, who were directly commissioned by Christ.
- **Baptism:** A Christian ritual signifying identification with Christ's death and resurrection, and entry into the Christian community. Its specific mode and meaning are debated.
- **Body of Christ:** A metaphor used to describe the church as a unified whole, with Christ as the head and individual believers as members with different functions.
- **Doxology:** A liturgical expression of praise and glory to God.
- **Edification:** The process of building up, strengthening, and encouraging the church spiritually.
- **Equipping (Katasmos):** The act of preparing, training, and enabling believers for ministry and service.
- **Evangelist:** One who proclaims the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ, often traveling to different locations.
- **Grace (Charis):** God's unmerited favor and gift, bestowed upon believers.
- **Ministry (Diakonia):** Service performed by believers to build up the church and serve others.
- **Pastor/Shepherd:** A leader in the church responsible for the spiritual care, guidance, and feeding of the flock (believers). Often linked with the role of teacher.
- **Prophet:** In this context, likely refers to individuals in the early church who spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the edification and encouragement of believers.
- **Saints (Hagioi):** Those who are set apart by God; believers in Jesus Christ.
- **Unity of the Spirit:** The spiritual oneness and harmony that exists among believers through the Holy Spirit, which should be actively maintained.

5. FAQs on Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build (Eph 4:1-16), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Unity and Growth in Ephesians 4:1-16

1. What is the central theme Paul emphasizes in Ephesians 4:1-16?

The central theme is the **unity of the Spirit** within the church and the importance of actively maintaining this unity in the bond of peace. Paul urges believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, highlighting seven shared commonalities that form the basis of this unity: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. This unity is not merely a suggestion but a divine desire and expectation for the church.

2. What are the seven commonalities that form the basis of Christian unity according to this passage?

Paul lists seven "ones" that believers share:

- **One body:** referring to the unified body of Christ, encompassing both Jews and Gentiles.
- **One Spirit:** the Holy Spirit who seals and works within all believers.
- **One hope:** the shared inheritance and promises of God.
- **One Lord:** Jesus Christ, through whom unity is achieved.
- **One faith:** a shared foundational doctrine centered on Jesus Christ's saving work.
- **One baptism:** a point of scholarly debate, potentially referring to Christian initiation, conversion, or the symbolic act of immersion or identification with Christ.
- **One God and Father of all:** the ultimate source of their being and unity as a family.

3. What is the significance of the debate surrounding "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5?

The debate centers on whether "one baptism" refers specifically to the mode of baptism (e.g., immersion) or to the essence and significance of Christian baptism as a whole (initiation into the faith in the name of the Trinity). Early church practices, as seen in the Didache, suggest immersion was primary but allowed for other methods in certain circumstances. Ultimately, the passage emphasizes the unifying aspect of Christian initiation and identification with Christ, rather than the specific ritualistic details that can be divisive.

4. How does Paul use the quotation from Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8, and what is its significance?

Paul quotes and adapts Psalm 68:18 to depict Christ as a **victorious king** who ascended on high, leading a host of captives and bestowing gifts upon humanity. While the psalm speaks of receiving gifts, Paul emphasizes Christ *giving* gifts, highlighting his authority and grace. The imagery suggests Christ's triumph over evil powers (potentially alluding to underworld themes prevalent in Ephesus) and his empowerment of believers through these gifts.

5. What are the gifts that Christ gives to the church, as listed in Ephesians 4:11?

Christ gives the following gifts to the church: **apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers**. These are not necessarily hierarchical roles but rather diverse functions within the body of Christ, each contributing to the growth and edification of the church. Apostles served as foundational leaders, prophets spoke edifying messages, evangelists preached the gospel, and shepherds (pastors) and teachers provided guidance and instruction.

6. What is the purpose of these gifts according to Ephesians 4:12?

The primary purpose of these gifts is **to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ**. This verse has been interpreted in different ways, with some emphasizing that the gifted leaders equip all believers for service (priesthood of all believers), while others see the leaders themselves as primarily responsible for the work of ministry. A balanced view suggests that the gifted leaders are to prepare and empower all believers to participate in building up the church.

7. What are the goals of this equipping and building up of the body of Christ, as outlined in Ephesians 4:13-14?

The ultimate goals are:

- **To attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God:** fostering a shared understanding and belief.
- **To mature manhood (or womanhood):** growing into spiritual maturity, reflecting Christ-like character and understanding.
- **To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:** reaching a state of completeness and wholeness in Christ, where the body functions as it should.
- **To no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine:** achieving stability and discernment to resist false teachings and deceitful schemes.

8. How are believers to achieve these goals of unity and maturity in the body of Christ, according to Ephesians 4:15-16?

Believers are to achieve these goals by **speaking the truth in love**, growing up in every way into Christ, who is the head. The whole body, being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love when each individual part works properly. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of believers, the importance of truthful and loving interactions, and the vital role each member plays in the overall health and growth of the church under the headship of Christ.