

## Ephesians Week 5 TDs

### 1. Revisit the Shape of Ephesians.

Step 4 of “Discovering the Shape of the Text” is to “Determine the purpose of the sections.” At this point, you should have a good idea of a more detailed shape or map of the first half of Ephesians. Add chapters 2 and 3 to your previous outline, and you’ll get something like this:

Introduction:	1:1-23
Prescript	1:1-2
Blessing	1:3-14
Thanksgiving	1:15-23
Middle/Body:	2:1-3:21
Section 1	2:1-10
Section 2	2:11-22
Section 3	3:1-13
Transition	3:14-21
Middle:	4:1-6:9
Conclusion:	6:10-24

**Instead of just an identification of the sections, give each section a title or description that captures some of the content and/or purpose of the section.**

You could use something like the following:

1:1-14: \_\_\_\_\_  
 1:15-23: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2:1-10: \_\_\_\_\_  
 2:11-21: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3:1-13: \_\_\_\_\_  
 3:14-21: \_\_\_\_\_

Or perhaps use a very brief phrase above/below each of the sections:

1:1-14      1:15-23      2:1-10      2:11-21      3:1-13      3:14-21

(In order not to be overly influenced by my labels, you should come up with your descriptions of the sections before looking at my outline. Rule #7 of good Bible reading is “Use commentaries and other study tools with discretion”—which basically means to do your own work in the text first. To that end, I’ll move my example to the end of this study guide.)

## 2. Explore Eph 4:1-16.

What separates or distinguishes Eph 4:1-16 as a section of material?

Color/Highlight key words and phrases.

What are the major themes of 4:1-16? What are the key thematic (words and phrases) connections with previous sections (1:3-14, 1:15-23, 2:1-10, 2:11-22, 3:1-13, 3:14-21)?

In a brief paragraph (or to yourself), summarize the content of 4:1-16. How does it relate to the first half of the letter?

Summarize 4:1-6 in a brief sentence; then summarize 4:7-16. How does unity relate to diversity in the church according to Ephesians? Why or how is that possible? What roles does “grace” play?

### Request/Petition

A common “plug-and-play” form or “sub-shape” of letters in Bible days is the Request form. I call these conventional structures or shapes “special paragraph markers.” Here’s a description from *Rediscovering the Books of God* (pp. 95-96):

Another common stereotyped shape in ancient Greek letters and the letters of Paul is the Petition or Request form. As a means of making formal request, sentences beginning with “I appeal to you (brothers)” or “I ask you (brothers)” highlight a very significant section of material that often represents the main reason for the letter. The three basic and necessary (always present either explicitly or implicitly) elements are (1) the background, (2) the petition verb, and (3) the desired action; (4) the address and (5) the courtesy phrase appear frequently as optional elaborations: “I ask you, therefore, brothers . . .” All types of requests were put into this form.

In the letters of Paul, such standardized requests occur frequently. *These formal requests—especially the first one in the letter—usually reflect the situation that produced the letter (the epistolary setting) and thereby show the primary purpose or goal of the letter-writer, especially in combination with the Thanksgiving (and in some cases, a Disclosure).* The Petition thus contains the actual concern or request of the letter. Observing the literary and historical (epistolary) value of the Petition as an introduction to a key section of material in Paul’s letters (another sort of topic sentence) certainly helps us understand the function of these sections and underscore their significance as special paragraph makers. They are, in other words, a sort of ancient way of bolding or highlighting a request.

### Bonus

What Old Testament scripture (and context) does Paul quote in Eph 4:8? Why might he have used that passage? How does it relate to the book-level context of Ephesians?

### 3. How Does 4:1-16 Fit/Function in the Book of Ephesians?

What is the first and major request of Ephesians? How does 4:1-16 pull together and complete the thematic development of the first half of the letter? How does it prepare for the second half of the letter?

What verse or verses provide a summary of the main message, point, or purpose of Ephesians (thus far)?

#### The Developing Shape/Map of Ephesians

Introduction:	1:1-23	
Prescript	1:1-2	Paul (apostle by the will of God) to Ephesians/faithful
Blessing	1:3-14	Spiritual blessing to “Us” (the first to hope) and to “You”
Thanksgiving	1:15-23	Prayer for understanding: calling, inheritance, power . . .
Middle/Body:	2:1-3:21	
Calling	2:1-10	Raised and seated with Christ: God’s new creation (for good works)
Inheritance	2:11-22	One new, purposeful humanity (out of Gentiles and Jews)
Power	3:1-13	Paul’s role/status is according to God’s power (so be encouraged)
Transition	3:14-21	Prayer for the power to understand the full dimension of God’s love
Middle:	4:1-6:9	
Petition	4:1-16	Request to live worthy: maintain the unity and working of the Spirit
Conclusion:	6:10-24	

#### Sample Highlighting of 4:1-16

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,<sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,<sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism,<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.<sup>7</sup> But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.<sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”<sup>9</sup> (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?<sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,<sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,<sup>13</sup> until we all 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,<sup>14</sup> [cf. 3:1-13:] 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.<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,<sup>16</sup> from 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**.

### Expert's Corner

### Key Questions Review

#### Ephesians 4:1-16

- What is the primary request of the letter and how does it relate to 2:1-10, 2:11-22, and 3:1-13?
- What is the primary thesis of the book? Why is there such a need to portray the church/God's new humanity as Christ's one, united body? Might this imply that someone is trying to define it another way (cf. 4:14-15)? Who? What are they saying? How are they defining it?
- How is unity created and maintained in the church? What's the role(s) of "grace" in this?
- What's the ultimate purpose of the church? How does it relate to the description of God's power and the rule of Christ in 1:19-23? How does it relate to the hope of God's calling described in 2:1-10? . . . the depiction of the "one new humanity" in 2:11-22? . . . the example and place of Paul in 3:1-13?
- How does Eph 4:1-16 function as a fulcrum in the structure/development of the letter? What key concept/theme is picked up in 4:1-16 that drives the remainder of the letter?