

PASTORAL BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

EPHESIANS 4:10-18

Christ builds up and transforms his Church

Unity, maturity, truth, and love

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1. Context and the flow of the passage

Ephesians first presents God's work in Christ and then describes the life of those who have received his grace. In chapters 1-3, Paul explains salvation, reconciliation, and the inclusion of Jewish and Gentile believers in one people. Beginning in chapter 4, that truth takes shape in everyday conduct. The call to live in a manner worthy of our calling does not ask us to purchase salvation through good works. It calls us to live in keeping with the salvation we have received (Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:1).

Before our passage, Ephesians 4:1-6 emphasizes humility, gentleness, patience, and unity. Verses 7-9 introduce the diversity of gifts and the relationship between Christ's descent and ascension. Verse 10 therefore does not stand alone: it identifies the Lord who descended as the very one who ascended. The Church receives its resources from this living, exalted Christ.

Ephesians 4:10-18 follows a clear progression: Christ holds the place of authority; he gives people to serve; believers are equipped; the body grows toward maturity; truth is lived in love; and the community is called to leave its former way of thinking and acting. Spiritual growth shapes our understanding of the gospel, our relationships, and our decisions.

Christian unity does not require everyone to perform the same task. It requires us to acknowledge the same Lord and direct our different forms of service toward building everyone up. A mature congregation learns to see its members as people called to participate, rather than as spectators.

Reading guidance. The explanations that follow are pastoral paraphrases of the passage, not a word-for-word reproduction of its nine verses. Reading Ephesians 4:1-24 helps preserve the context. The purpose is to understand how Christ builds up his

Church and how this new life transforms our thinking, service, and relationships.

2. The exalted Christ and gifts for service

Ephesians 4:10. Paul directs our attention to Christ. The one who descended is also the one who ascended above the heavens. This language points to his exaltation and authority; it does not provide a physical map of the universe. His purpose of filling all things places the Church under the lordship of the one whose work is not confined to a community or a territory (see also Ephesians 1:20-23).

The statement about descent in 4:9 has received different interpretations. Some relate it primarily to the incarnation; others connect it with descent into the lower regions associated with death. We do not need to resolve every aspect of that discussion to recognize the center of our passage: the Christ who humbled himself is the same exalted Lord who gives gifts to his people. A disputed interpretive issue should not become the focus of the teaching.

Ephesians 4:11. The Lord gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The emphasis falls on Christ's initiative and the good of his Church, rather than on the personal greatness of those who serve. A gift is received to help others. It does not authorize anyone to replace the Lord, claim control over people's consciences, or treat believers as a leader's property.

Apostles and prophets are connected with the Church's foundation in Ephesians 2:20 and with the revelation of the mystery in 3:5. Evangelists proclaim the gospel; pastors care for and guide the flock; teachers help people understand the truth. Pastors and teachers are closely connected in the wording of this verse. That connection highlights the need for faithful teaching in spiritual care, without settling every question about church offices.

Christian traditions differ over the continuation and scope of some of these ministries. The passage nevertheless clearly affirms that Christ provides service and teaching to build up his body. Every ministry must be evaluated by its faithfulness to the gospel and the fruit of its care, rather than by a title alone.

Pastoral application. Gratitude for the gifts we receive calls us to use them humbly. Those who teach must keep learning; those who lead must accept correction; those who proclaim Christ must keep Christ at the center.

3. Equipping believers for unity and maturity

Ephesians 4:12. These ministries prepare the saints for service and for building up the body of Christ. Here, saints means believers set apart for God, rather than an exceptional class of flawless people. The whole Church is called to serve, although tasks, abilities, and responsibilities differ.

Insight from the interlinear. On printed page 767, Lacueva explains the preparation in verse 12 in terms of equipping and the condition described in verse 13 in terms of the body's maturity. These notes help us understand that ministry prepares believers to serve and that the goal is growth in conformity to Christ, rather than spiritual self-sufficiency.

Equipping involves teaching, accompanying, correcting, and helping each believer fulfill a responsibility. Healthy ministry does not create permanent dependence on a leader. It helps people understand Scripture, pray, exercise discernment, care for their neighbors, and participate responsibly. Building up the body means strengthening its life according to Christ, rather than simply expanding an organization.

Ephesians 4:13. Paul describes a shared goal: unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity measured by the fullness of Christ. The expression concerning a perfect or mature person refers here to the body's adult, mature condition.

It does not claim that believers attain absolute sinlessness in this life or cease to need grace.

Unity in faith has substance: it centers on trust in Christ and the truth about him. Knowing the Son of God involves more than collecting religious information. It includes acknowledging who he is, resting in his work, and learning to live under his authority. Without truth, unity becomes fragile; without love, knowledge can become pride.

Christ himself is the measure of growth. Comparison between congregations and a leader's prestige cannot replace that measure. Maturity includes learning to listen, giving up rivalries, accepting responsibilities, and recognizing other people's needs. A church may have many activities and still need to grow in patience and mercy.

Pastoral application. Does our service help others know the Lord better? New believers need nourishment and companionship; experienced believers need perseverance and humility. We all advance by God's grace, and no one has permission to look down on someone who is still learning.

4. Discernment and truth in love

Ephesians 4:14. Maturity protects against instability. Paul compares spiritual immaturity to children tossed about by currents of teaching and strategies of deception. He is not condemning actual childhood or simple trust in God. He describes the vulnerability of a community that has not yet learned to recognize teaching consistent with the gospel.

The warning includes deliberate cunning intended to lead people astray. Not every interpretive difference is fraud, but not every religious claim should be accepted without examination. Emotion, popularity, and a speaker's confidence do not guarantee biblical faithfulness. Discernment requires attention to context, the whole of Scripture, and our own limitations.

In practice, we should ask: What does the passage actually say? To whom is it addressed? What argument surrounds it? Does this teaching keep Christ and his work at the center? Does it encourage responsibility or demand dependence on the speaker? Acts 17:11 provides a complementary example of careful examination of Scripture.

Ephesians 4:15. Paul's response is not an aggressive community always ready to argue. He brings truth and love together. The expression embraces a sincere commitment to truth in both speech and conduct. The purpose is to grow in every respect toward Christ, the head. He determines the direction of the body's life.

Saying something true does not justify humiliating someone. Loving someone does not require concealing what needs correction. Faithful counsel seeks restoration, explains clearly, listens, and considers the other person's weakness. Truth spoken without care may wound unnecessarily; affection that abandons truth leaves a brother or sister without guidance.

Pastoral application. Before correcting someone, examine your motive and manner. Are we trying to help or to impose our will? Have we understood the other person's view? Can we support our claim from the text? Growing toward Christ means learning to speak with calm conviction and to receive correction without turning it into hostility.

5. A body that participates and grows

Ephesians 4:16. The whole body receives cohesion and coordination from Christ. Paul describes a community joined together through supporting relationships, with activity appropriate to each part. The result is the body's growth and its building itself up in love. Christ is the source, and the members' participation is real and necessary.

This image guards against two extremes. No person should imagine being self-sufficient and disconnected from others; no person should assume a quiet form of service has no value. Teaching, hospitality, prayer, material assistance, visiting the sick, and companionship can contribute to life together. The verse does not list all these tasks, but its principle helps us recognize their value.

The activity of each part requires recognition of abilities and limitations. Not everyone can carry the same burden or hold the same responsibility. Supporting an exhausted believer, allowing someone time to learn, and distributing tasks fairly express care for the body. Participation does not mean exploitation or a demand for constant performance.

Love is the setting and purpose of building up the Church. A community grows as it learns to support the weak, restore those who stumble, and welcome new believers. Numbers can provide information, but they cannot by themselves measure the maturity Paul describes. Spiritual development should be evident in faithfulness, mutual support, and reconciled relationships.

Doctrinal connection. Salvation is received by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), and a life of service belongs to God's purpose for those in Christ (2:10). Works do not purchase divine acceptance; they express new life. Service should therefore never become a competition to gain greater worth before God.

Pastoral application. If you think you have nothing to contribute, begin with something possible: listen, pray for someone, learn to serve better, or help meet a practical need. If you hold a visible responsibility, help others participate as well. The body is strengthened when its members care for one another.

6. The former life and the understanding

Ephesians 4:17. Paul shifts his emphasis. After describing the body's growth, he urges believers to leave their former way of life. He speaks with authority in the Lord. Although many of his readers were Gentiles by origin, they now belong to Christ. The reference to Gentiles here describes the pagan world outside that new life; it does not justify ethnic contempt or cultural superiority.

The futility of the mind points to an orientation that fails to reach its true purpose before God. It does not imply a lack of intelligence, culture, or skill. A person may be highly capable in many areas yet organize life without acknowledging the Creator. Paul's concern is spiritual and moral, rather than a classification of intellectual ability.

Ephesians 4:18. Darkened understanding and separation from the life of God are related to ignorance and hardness of heart. Paul is describing more than missing information. He portrays a condition in which inward resistance affects understanding and one's relationship with God. Learning religious facts alone is not the same as receiving the life God offers.

This diagnosis should be applied humbly. Ephesians 2:1-5 reminds us that believers also needed mercy. We should not regard people who do not believe as contemptible enemies. Grace calls us to proclaim Christ respectfully, remember our own past, and patiently accompany those who have questions or wounds.

The text does not allow us to equate mental illness, cognitive difficulties, or an emotional crisis automatically with spiritual hardness. Paul describes an orientation toward God; he is not making a clinical diagnosis. Confusing those categories can cause harm and depart from the passage's purpose.

The necessary continuation. Verses 19-24 complete the contrast. In place of their former conduct, believers have

learned Christ and are called to renewal and new life. Ephesians 4:10-18 prepares that development. A pastoral response does not end with identifying darkness; it points to the Lord who saves, renews, and teaches us to walk in truth.

7. An integrated pastoral narrative and application

Let us picture the Church gathered under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Its hope does not arise from the strength of its leaders. The Lord who descended and was exalted knows his people and gives them what they need to move forward. He calls people to proclaim, care, and teach, so that believers learn to serve and the body is strengthened.

At first, many arrive with questions, fears, and habits that need to be examined. The community should not demand instant maturity. It should provide faithful teaching, patient companionship, and opportunities for growth. Gradually, faith becomes steadier, knowledge of Christ deepens, and differences cease to provide an excuse for rivalry.

When confusing teachings arise, the mature Church returns to Scripture. It is not carried away by every new idea, and it does not turn discernment into pride. It learns to uphold truth in love. Christ is its head, and every member finds a way to contribute to the good of others.

Finally, Paul reminds us that new life calls for a new direction. Continuing to think and act as though God did not exist contradicts the calling we have received. This exhortation flows from grace: the Lord who welcomes us also teaches us to leave hardness behind, acknowledge the truth, and walk with a willing heart.

For personal and group reflection. Am I growing in my knowledge of Christ or merely accumulating information? Does my service help others participate? How do I examine what I

hear? Can I speak the truth without contempt? What specific decision needs to be renewed in light of God's Word?

Suggested prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your grace and your care for your Church. Teach us to serve humbly, discern faithfully, and speak lovingly. Renew our understanding and soften our hearts. Help us grow together under your authority and care for those who need companionship. Amen.

8. A summary of the nine verses

Ephesians 4:10. The one who descended is the same one who ascended above the heavens to fill all things. The focus is Christ's exaltation and the scope of his lordship.

Ephesians 4:11. Christ gives people who proclaim, care, and teach. Ministries arise from his initiative and should serve the good of the body.

Ephesians 4:12. Ministry equips believers and strengthens the Church. Everyone is called to participate according to their responsibilities and abilities.

Ephesians 4:13. The shared goal is unity in faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity in conformity to Christ.

Ephesians 4:14. Maturity helps believers resist doctrinal instability and strategies of deception. Biblical discernment is needed.

Ephesians 4:15. Truth should be lived and expressed in love. Growth is directed toward Christ, the head.

Ephesians 4:16. The body's cohesion comes from Christ; every member contributes to its growth and its building itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:17. A new identity in the Lord calls for abandoning the former orientation of life and the futility of the mind.

Ephesians 4:18. Darkened understanding and separation from the life of God are related to ignorance and hardness of heart.

Pastoral conclusion. Christ does not leave his Church to improvise on its own. He provides resources for growth, calls it to serve, and directs its life toward truth and love. The believer's response is grateful dependence, responsible participation, and a continuing willingness to learn. These summaries are editorial paraphrases, not direct quotations.

9. References and reading principles

Primary passage. Ephesians 4:10-18. Biblia Reina-Valera 1960. References identify the underlying passages; the explanations and summaries in this report are pastoral paraphrases.

Immediate context. Ephesians 4:1-6 describes the character of a life worthy of the calling and the foundation of unity. Ephesians 4:7-9 introduces gifts and the relationship between descent and ascension. Ephesians 4:19-24 completes the contrast between former conduct and renewal in Christ.

Complementary passages. Ephesians 1:20-23 presents Christ's exaltation and his relationship with the Church. Ephesians 2:1-10 describes mercy, salvation by grace, and good works as its fruit. Ephesians 2:19-22 and 3:5-6 explain the Church's foundation and the inclusion of Gentiles. Acts 17:11 illustrates the examination of Scripture. First Corinthians 12:12-27 develops diversity and mutual care within one body.

Interlinear consulted. Francisco Lacueva, *Nuevo Testamento interlineal griego-español*, digital copy supplied by the compiler, Ephesians 4, printed pages 767-768; PDF pages 773-774. Consultation verifies the context and notes concerning equipping, maturity, and expressing truth in love. The report's pastoral applications are not attributed to Lacueva.

Scope. The content of the passage is distinguished from its applications. Debated questions are identified as such. Maturity is not equated with sinlessness, service does not purchase salvation, and a spiritual diagnosis is not confused with a medical diagnosis. Teaching should be examined in light of the whole of Scripture.

Multilingual edition. The American English and Brazilian Portuguese versions translate the Spanish narrative and its editorial summaries. They are not presented as official translations of the Reina-Valera 1960 Bible or Lacueva's interlinear. The compiler's biographical information and photograph come from the supplied curriculum document.

EPHESIANS 4:10-18

Christ builds up and transforms his Church

From Christ's exaltation to a renewed life

1 The exalted Christ
Ephesians 4:10



The one who descended also ascended above the heavens to fill all things.

2 Gifts for service
Ephesians 4:11



Christ gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the good of his Church.

3 Equipped to serve
Ephesians 4:12



Believers are equipped for ministry and for building up the body of Christ.

4 Unity and maturity
Ephesians 4:13



We grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Christ is our measure.

5 Steadfast in truth
Ephesians 4:14



Maturity helps us resist deceptive teaching. Let us examine everything in light of Scripture.

6 Truth in love
Ephesians 4:15



Let us live and speak the truth in love. Correction should help, never humiliate.

7 Christ is the head
Ephesians 4:15-16



Growth comes from Christ. He guides his Church and sustains the life of the body.

8 Every member matters
Ephesians 4:16



We all contribute to the body's growth. We build one another up through loving care.

9 Leave the former life
Ephesians 4:17



Our new identity in the Lord calls us to leave our former direction and the futility of the mind.

10 A willing heart
Ephesians 4:18



Hardness darkens understanding and separates us from God's life. Let us receive his truth humbly.

11 Learn with humility
Ephesians 4:12-15



Pastoral application: learn, discern, and accept correction. No one outgrows the need for grace.

12 Serve in love
Ephesians 4:12,16



Pastoral application: care for your neighbor. Service expresses new life; it does not purchase salvation.

Christ is the head. We grow together in truth and love.

Personalized by: Ruperto Bravo Benavente (R.B.B.)
Reina Valera 1960 · Nuevo Testamento Interlineal Griego-Español · Francisco Lacueva
Pastoral summaries, not direct Bible quotations. Illustrative scenes.

11. Compiler biography



RUPERTO BRAVO BENAVENTE (R.B.B.)

Senior project developer and process engineering expert with more than 40 years of experience in the technical and financial structuring of industrial, agrifood, and critical infrastructure complexes. A specialist in modernizing investment models and implementing advanced technologies (extrusion, cryogenics, HIMSS 7), with a focus on economic feasibility under international standards of the Chamber of Commerce in Paris (ICC).

Compiler and editor of biblical and educational study materials.

Resident of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In this work, he serves as initiator, compiler, and the person responsible for the editorial presentation. The doctrinal content is grounded in the indicated biblical references and should be examined in light of Holy Scripture.

Editorial note. Only professional background relevant to a public publication is included. Sensitive personal information, identity documents, addresses, and other private details are omitted. This biography is translated from the document supplied by the compiler.