

Matt Henry  
 Ephesians 4:1-16  
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“One Calling”

Grace and peace...

For my amusement, I googled “one hit wonders” and up came list after list of musicians and bands who are only known for one song and one song only. I will name the artist. You tell me the one-hit wonder! Here are some of them:

Vanilla Ice	Ice Ice Baby
Carl Douglas	Kung Fu Fighting
Norman Greenbaum	Spirit in the Sky
Rednex	Cotton Eye Joe

Who can forget those winners, right? Their songs are familiar but the artists not so much. And then there are those artists who have so many number one hits, they may just release an album with all the songs that went number one. Beatles, Michael Jackson, BeeGees...they all put out compilation albums of #1s.

When I read Ephesians 4, I think Paul is putting out one of those compilation albums of the church, the *una sancta*, the one holy Christian and apostolic church throughout the ages. So let us count up those hits shall we? There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. Those are all the #1 hits. But what’s interesting is that there are seven of

them, so once again, since seven is a number of completion, Paul, whether he realizes it or not, is getting across the divine essence of God's church.

Because there is only one of each, what then should be the result for us as God's people? We should be marked by unity and seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But we know there are so many lines of division and denominations, that unity is just not there. Some people have to be in total agreement before they consider themselves to be on the same team. Case in point, one of my favorite jokes...

*I was walking across a bridge one day, and I saw a man standing on the edge, about to jump off. So I ran over and said, "Stop! Don't do it!" "Why shouldn't I?" he said. I said, "Well, there's so much to live for!" He said, "Like what?" I searched for something spiritual, "Well, are you religious or atheist?" He said, "Religious." I said, "Me too! Are your Christian or Buddhist?"*

*He said, "Christian." I said, "Me too! Are you Catholic or Protestant?"*

*He said, "Protestant." I said, Me too! Are your Episcopalian or Baptist?*

*He said, "Baptist!" I said, "Wow! Me too! Are your Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?*

*He said, Baptist Church of God!" I said, "Me too! Are your Original Baptist Church of God or are you Reformed Baptist Church of God?"*

*He said, "Reformed Baptist Church of God!" I said, "Me too! Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1879, or Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1915?"*

*He said, "Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1915!" I said, "Die, heretic scum!" and pushed him off the bridge.*

Good ol' denominationalism. There's really not that much you or I can do about it, aside from not pushing people off bridges. But how about this? What about when there is a lack of unity in a single congregation? See, there we can do something. We can choose to work for unity—anytime we come together is an expression of unity, praying for others is an expression of unity, working toward a common goal and vision is an expression of unity. But it can't be unity for unity's sake because that's not where Paul leaves it. He builds on the concept of unity. Verses 1-6 are about unity. But verses 7-16 are about maturity.

What kind of process is involved here? There is one calling and that is the call to grow. Growth is a natural result of life when its needs are met. Healthy things grow. And if you notice, in this text, Paul is talking about growing from being an children to becoming mature people. This is right in line with the stages of spiritual growth—infant, child, young adult and parent. Look at verse 13. The goal is to be built up, "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, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine...". Children being tossed around on the waves works for Wild Waves. But it's not our calling. We can't stay as children even as much as we might want to be. Our calling is to grow unto the maturity and "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (v. 13).

Isn't this true? In terms of spiritual growth, you are either growing or you're not. To grow means to change, to develop, to mature. It means to stop being who are. It means start becoming who you are called to be.

That kind of growth brings on all sorts of changes and challenges.

For example, there can be growing pains. Youth in adolescence sometimes complain that they hurt. They are growing so fast that the body's bones and muscles are just trying to catch up and adjust. The growth is good, but it takes some getting used to. Spiritually, there can be growing pains too. A lot of change can happen quickly—especially in the beginning. When we grow, it can be awkward too because spiritually, we have new abilities and we're trying them out for the first time. So we need the room and opportunity to try things out in this stage.

Growing is sometimes resisted because it means a loss of the familiar. But we're not called to stay the same. We move on in life, we grow through things. We change. If you recall parenting a little one, you might remember seeing pamphlets or reading books about what your child should be able to do when, what his or her needs are at each stage. They meet the benchmarks of development. Spiritually, I think there are benchmarks as well, aren't there? There would have to be if we are to go from being infants to mature manhood. There are steps along the way. It doesn't happen at once biologically nor spiritually. But it is designed to happen! And if it doesn't something's amiss. There's a failure to thrive. We were always designed to grow.

Now this is the way God set it up for the church. Verse 11, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers..." Let's just look at the order there because Paul is not just pulling words or titles out of thin air. They are related. And here's the relationship. One prepares the way for the other. Apostles are sent with authority. They prepare the way for prophets who declare the word of the Lord. Prophets prepare the way for evangelists. Evangelists bring people to faith. When someone is a believer, they need to be placed under the care of a shepherd, a pastor. That same person also needs a teacher. So we started out with apostle and prophets where there is less

relationship and we made it to shepherds and teachers where there is a high degree of relationship with the people. An apostle is all over the place. But a shepherd, and a teacher, their circles are much smaller. They're localized.

All you need to know is that these offices work together and have a common purpose: EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR WORK OF MINISTRY. You are the saints. You are God's people. That means my job is not to do the job for you, but to equip you to do the job. What's the job? Paul says "ministry" but he could have just as well said "make disciples" because that's the job. Equipping means sharing and showing. It involves expectation as well as exhortation. One reason why I think discipling is so awesome is because it gives everyone a place to play. It involves everybody and causes them to grow. You have a right to be equipped for ministry. You should expect to be equipped for building up the body of Christ.

To what end? Until we have unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God. For what purpose, so what we grow and become like Him. Verse 15 says, "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." Cause we're the body. And the body is designed to grow.

We are called to both unity and maturity in the faith. That means no matter where we're at in our relationship with God, we all need to grow in Christ. Discipleship is ultimately the way to "walk in the manner worthy of your calling"

as Paul says. If we do not pursue the way of discipleship, expect factions and foolishness. But if we truly are His disciples, we will grow into the fullness of Christ.

Is unity the same as conformity? No. In no way am I saying we all have to be the same, because we're not the same. We have different gifts, different roles. But it's in the working together that unity can be seen.

I also don't want to confuse physical and spiritual maturity. Just because you are chronologically gifted, doesn't mean you are spiritually mature. So don't confuse the two. Nor does being youthful say one is spiritually immature. Isn't that what Paul said to Timothy, "Don't let anyone despise you because of your youth, but set for the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).

We cannot grow without each other. We need the relationship. An infant needs a parent, that much is clear, they are dependent. But it also works the other way. Think how much you grew as a person, in your character, when you became a parent. Think of all the changes and maturity that introduced. Same goes for discipling. A young adult will never become a parent unless he or she is actually doing the work that is necessary when we disciple others. A spiritual parent needs a child in order to grow.

We have one calling and that calling brings us together for the purpose of becoming like Jesus. Unity and maturity. Growing together and growing to become more like Jesus. Life is about growth, it's about becoming. I would love for this church to not be good at everything, but to be excellent at just one thing—discipling. Just that alone. That's what we are equipped for. The goal of our faith is when people think of us, they may not know our name, but they will know that above all else, we love Jesus because He first loved us and made us a child of God, we want people to know Him and love Him too.

In Jesus' name, Amen.