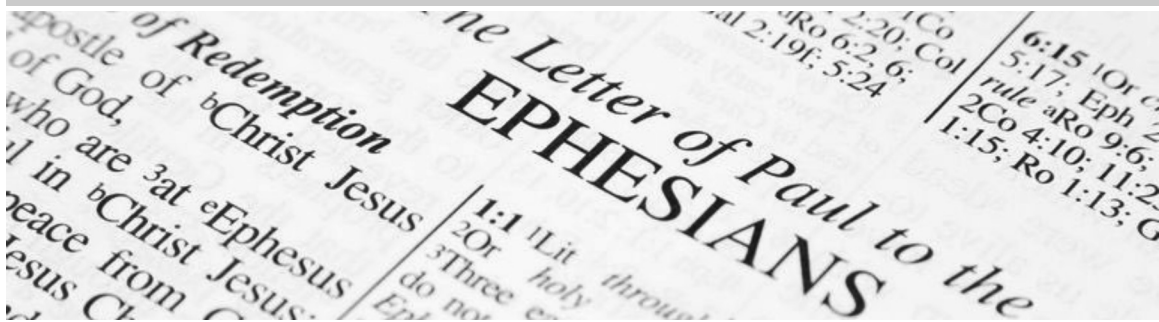


7 ONES

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THE POWER OF ONE

EPHESIANS 4.1-3



ONE Part One: Lesson

Have you ever thought about the power of ONE? At 33 degrees Fahrenheit water is really cold, but that's it: it's just cold. But at 32 degrees, just one degree colder, it freezes. Such a small change can make a drastic difference.

If the earth was just one degree closer to the sun, we would be burned alive. If the earth was just one degree farther away from the sun, we would freeze to death. The number one is powerful.

Whether it be one Bible study, one encouraging word, one welcoming smile, one comforting hug, one voice heard, or one compassionate heart, it all makes a difference in the long run. We have one God: one omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God. That one God created you, and He expects you to be someONE who makes a difference.

Every time I am on a mission trip, or working as a part of a group, I get to see the power of one demonstrated. one is powerful.

Nowhere else does God talk more specifically about the power of one than in **Ephesians 4.1-6**:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

Let's start putting this together. In Ephesians 4.1, Paul is urging us to do something—to walk in a worthy manner. He is urging us to change the way we think about ourselves. He uses the word "you" here: "I...urge you to walk." But if you keep reading, it's clear that Paul is not talking about us individually. He's addressing the entire body of Christ and telling us as that body to become one.

According to 4.2, this walk you are taking with Christ, this "follow me, let's take a walk," must be done in a certain way—with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In other words, this isn't about you, individually. You are not walking alone. You don't bear with yourself, bond with yourself, maintain unity with yourself. There are other people involved. Look around. These verses are about us, about the church, about becoming one. Earlier Paul writes in **Ephesians 2.15b-16a**:

His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, so making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross..."

(Ephesians 2.15b-16a)

God made one body because of the work of the cross. The “7 Ones” listed in Ephesians 4 are about unity, a bond, patience, love, humility, and gentleness. It is about becoming one! And there is power in that.

Paul begins this letter by reminding the Ephesians of what they have in Christ and then he says this in **Ephesians 1.18-23**:

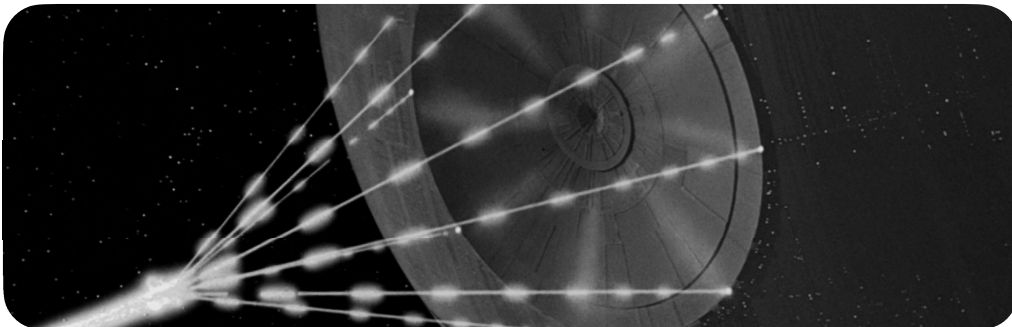
I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great **power working** for us who believe.

That **power** is the same as the **mighty strength** He **exerted** when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be Head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

(Ephesians 1.18-23, NIV)

We need to talk about this power that we are tied to. If what you are tied to isn't powerful then what does it matter? I can have the plans for the one and only Star Wars Death Star Superlaser, and build it myself, but if it has no power in it then what good is it? The point is that we really cannot talk about Ephesians 4 without first talking about Ephesians 1.



We will not understand why the 7 Ones from Ephesians 4 are so important if we don't understand the power to which they are tied.

Paul says we have hope tied to **power!** This hope comes from being tied to the resurrection of Jesus. When talking about our hope, and the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, Ephesians 1 says four times that it happens through the might and power of God!

THE POWER OF GOD IN EPHESIANS 1		
VERSE	WORD	MEANING
Ephesians 1.19	"power"	Greek: inherent power, strength and ability; root of English word <i>dynamite</i>
Ephesians 1.19	"working"	Greek: in the NT used only to refer to superhuman power; root of English word <i>energy</i>
Ephesians 1.19	"mighty strength"	strength, ability, force
Ephesians 1.20	"exerted"	put forth power, worked to raise Jesus from the dead and give us hope

That is a lot of God's power on display! Talk about the power of One!

But here's the really important thing: we are tied to the same power that raised Christ from the dead! That is the one power we are connected to, called to, asked to walk in, and be united in as one body. Are we not drawn to power? There is no greater power than God's. This is about one, and there is power in it.

As we go through this study, we will see this power shown through seven areas that God wants us to know deeply.

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. What are some things the church can accomplish if we work together as one?
2. After hearing about the power you are connected to, how does that change the way you live in this world?
3. Why do you think it is important that God wants our eyes opened to walk in a way where we are aware of each other and these seven things?

ONE BODY

EPHESIANS 4.4



ONE Part One: Lesson

Remember, our major text for this study is found in **Ephesians 4.1-6**:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

Boxtopia was the name of a box-building location for kids at our local city square. You had to wear a cape, you had to enter through a secret door, and you were supposed to go inside and, along with other kids, build this city out of boxes. Some of the kids had gotten in way before ours and had already invested a lot of time into building the city. Some kids, like mine, had just started. And then there's me, standing there watching them build things.



Then I realized I was watching something that looked like the one body. We are clothed with Christ, given one Spirit, and enter into His one body through one baptism in order to participate in one mission where there is one God and Father of all! Some have been here a lot longer and invested more time into building than others who just got here, but we will all be given the same reward.

This one body should be wearing Christ, and should be busy building up each other and the kingdom of God, but instead we look around the church and there are people busy tearing things down. Even worse, they do it while claiming to wear the name of Christ!

Back to Boxtopia. We hadn't been there long at all when my daughter Laura said she didn't want to wear her cape anymore. She wasn't interested in building the city, but instead wanted to be Laura the Destroyer. Jesus Christ is not about destroying people. In fact, He has

torn down “the wall of hostility” that separated us! (Ephesians 2.14). He did work on the cross, making peace, uniting us, and He is still building today in heaven preparing a place for you.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(1 Corinthians 12.12-14; 20-27)

If you are in Christ, you are part of one body and have been given one Spirit. However, we are individually arranged by God in the body and given different abilities. Are you using your abilities or ignoring them?

It is no wonder to me why the church is not more effective. The problem is that it has many members who choose to ignore their purpose and the part God asks them to play in the body. They pretend they have no abilities and forget they are connected to such power. What a shame!

I want you to look around you. When God looks at the body, He sees you as individual parts of a whole. You are incomplete without Him, and you are incomplete without each other. *I am not the church. We are the church.* I cannot be the church by myself. I am only one part. I need you to see yourself like God sees you. That is what struck me about Boxtopia: no one had to tell them to work together. They just did. They built on what others had built. They helped each other and were excited to see what they could build together.

My wife and I lived in China for a year. We lived on a huge university campus. Every student there had to go through six weeks of mandatory military training. On our college campus we watched them learn to march in unity. I am sure you have seen a few people attempt this. It is something else to see thousands of people participating in one unified action. What if the church went through six weeks of unity training so that the body would function as one? If the body of Christ would do that, then the world would certainly see Him.

There is one body called to one hope to participate in one mission, and there power in one.

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. If you were in Boxtopia what would you build? Do you think you could do that by yourself or would you need others?
2. How does it feel to be a part of something as big as the church?
3. What are some things you are doing as part of the one body?
4. What do we need to build together in the church?

ONE SPIRIT

EPHESIANS 4.4



ONE Part One: Lesson

Remember, our major text for this study is found in **Ephesians 4.1-6**:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

One of the interesting things we find in this passage is how Paul emphasizes the importance of the Trinity. The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, but refers to the biblical teaching that God exists as three “persons”, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and we see that in this section of Scripture. Today we are going to look at one of those persons, the Holy Spirit, and we’re going to see how important the Spirit is to us.

To help us follow Him, God has given us one Spirit. There is one body and one Spirit. It is very fitting that “one Spirit” follows “one body”

because God and His Spirit are one, and it is God's Spirit that helps to bring unity to the church (which is His body).

Furthermore, the Spirit gives life. When the Bible talks about our spirits, it is referring to breath, or to the idea of life itself. It is the Spirit of God that animates our bodies—the Bible even describes the Spirit as the "Spirit of life" (Romans 8.2).

Jesus explains this concept further in John 6.63 after He describes Himself as the Bread of life, saying, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life." We always believe that food keeps us alive, but the life-giving power isn't in food or anything else, it comes from the Spirit. Jesus' point that many in John 6 found hard to believe was that if we want life, *real* life, *eternal* life, it is found only in God and comes through his one Spirit. Do you believe that?

God wants us and His Spirit to become one. That is powerful. I want you to understand what a huge deal this is. We often forget all the things the Spirit of God has been involved in throughout the Bible. The list is long, and the following is not a complete list at all, but here are some highlights:

(A PARTIAL LIST OF) THE WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT

The Spirit of God hovered over creation (Genesis 1.2)

The Spirit of God rested on Jesus at His baptism (Matthew 3.16)

The Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8.11)

The Spirit of God flowed through the early church (Acts 1-2)

The Spirit of God seals our inheritance with God (2 Cor. 1.22; Eph. 1.13-14)

There is one Spirit and God wants us and His Spirit to become one.

In John 14, Jesus is sharing the last supper with His apostles, and He starts teaching them about the One Spirit:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

(John 14.16-17; 26)

In Matthew 10, Jesus is about to send His twelve apostles out alone to preach. He is not going with them. He tells them a number of things, but He includes something about the one Spirit. He says:

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

(Matthew 10.17-20)

Here, Jesus explains to them what the Spirit of God is able to do through them. Later, the Spirit continued to give them the words and helped them write down and remember all Jesus said so we can read them today.

There is only one God and Father of all who is over all through all and *in* all! He went further than becoming flesh and living among us; He chose

to put His Spirit inside of us to guide us and to guarantee our inheritance. In the Book of Ezekiel, God is talking about Israel and He tells them the role His Spirit will have in their restoration:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

(Ezekiel 36.26-27)

Let's close our discussion by looking at what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:

"My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 2.4-16)

I want to make sure you have not missed some important ideas in this passage. Speaking of the power of one, in 2.4, Paul's message was not about any display of wise words but to show the Spirit's power. He wanted people's faith to be built upon the power of God. In 2.12, he says we have received this Spirit so that we may understand what God has freely given us and what He is trying to tell us. He wants your faith to rest on God's power.

The Spirit of God imparts the wisdom of God and reveals things like "the mind of Christ," the very thoughts of God that only His Spirit would know. The role of the Spirit must not be understated.

ONE There is a lot about the Holy Spirit we do not know. The mystery of God is great (1 Timothy 3.16). But we do know this: God wants us and His Spirit to become one.

Part Two: Discussion Questions

- 1. What do you now understand about the Spirit of God that you did not before?**
- 2. Why is it important that our faith is built upon God's power and not upon something else?**
- 3. What is the Spirit of God able to reveal to us that no one else can? (1 Corinthians 2.10)**
- 4. How are we able to understand the mind of Christ?**

ONE HOPE

EPHESIANS 4.4



ONE Part One: Lesson

Again, we start with the text for this series:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

There is one body just as you were called to one hope. Hope is a huge connector when we look at these seven elements together. The power of one body is that we are called to share with others the one hope we have. We need to look around and see our one mission to build each other up and share hope. That is the gospel—sharing hope! Sharing the hope the cross brought and the empty tomb verified. Sharing the power that this one hope is connected to is such a humbling thing to witness.

Later on we will talk about the one faith; right now, I want to look at the verse we often use to define *faith*, but I want you to notice what it says about *hope*.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

(Hebrews 11.1)

This verse says that faith is being sure of what we *hope* for. Isn't that what we long for? We want to be sure about things. We hope for so many big things. We hope there is a God. We hope heaven is real. We hope we will be saved. But faith says we don't hope for these things without assurance or conviction. Faith isn't just a mental assent to a list of things, it is an act of trust that God's promises are true. We live our lives based on this assurance. It is a part of everything we do. When we give up faith, we give up hope as well. Faith is very powerful because it gives us hope that will be fulfilled, and hope leads you to keep trusting God over and over again.

It is the conviction of the unseen. When we give up hope with assurance, we just have a blind hope not grounded in anything. We can't see the wind, but we feel the effects of the wind. We do not see the air, but every second we are reminded that we need it, and that it is provided for us. That is assurance of things that we cannot see, but we are convicted that it is there. What does this conviction lead to?

The things we know about God is what the hope stands on. And what do we know about God when it comes to hope? In the end of the Book of Romans, Paul describes God in a unique way.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

(Romans 15.13)

Paul says He is the God of hope! He is a God who gives us everything we need, and we need hope. He tells us that we have it in Him. He is the God of hope. And then Paul talks about God being able to make us abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Praise God that He is not just a God of hope, but He fills our life with that hope!

What does this hope do?

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

(Hebrews 6.19-20)

Hope entered into a place for us we could not go, behind the curtain, but more specifically into the throne room of God Himself where only He could go. But it wasn't an abstract concept that entered on our behalf, it was more real than that. Hope is embodied in Jesus Himself, the one and only Son of God. Jesus entered with His sacrifice for us to pay our debt once and for all. That is why the writer says we have "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope..." (Hebrews 6.19). Hope is an anchor upon which we can build our lives. Hope goes where nothing else can go.

**HOPE IS AN ANCHOR
UPON WHICH WE
CAN BUILD OUR
LIVES.**



Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

(Ephesians 2.12)

Remember where real hope comes from. We live in a world with lots of false hopes, but without God there is no hope. Only God can draw us near to Himself and bring us hope. Keep reading in Ephesians 2:

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

(Ephesians 2.18-19)

It is because of this hope, because of what Jesus did for us, that we now have access to one Spirit and God the Father. It is not wishful thinking for us to hope that we get to live in God's house. It is a *reality*. We are bought and adopted as members, as family, to the household of God. Hope does that.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

(Ephesians 1.11-13; 18)

Not only does hope provide access to the Father and His Spirit, but also hope in Christ—which comes from being put into Christ in baptism—

leads to an inheritance with God as well.

Paul wants us to know what the hope we are being called to is and what comes with it. This kind of hope brings assurance. It brings peace.

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

(Hebrews 12.18-24)

This one hope is not like anything else we will ever encounter. In this passage from Hebrews 12, there is a lot going on, but simply, we find two contrasting descriptions of how people look at God. Some see God as an unapproachable Being whose presence none can endure. But God tells us that He has made Himself approachable by taking on the form of a man in Jesus. We come to Jesus in faith, and Jesus, our Mediator, enters behind the curtain and establishes a new covenant, a new arrangement between God and us. Will you live in that kind of hope?

Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

(Romans 5.5)

This one hope does not put us to shame. It does not disappoint. It is full of power that drives our life of faith. It should fill us with confidence in

the God we serve, in the one Lord we obey and unify us in the one body we belong to.

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. Why is hope so powerful?
2. How is hope in God different from the hope that is found in the world?
3. How do you share this hope with others who live without it?

ONE LORD

EPHESIANS 4.5



ONE Part One: Lesson

We begin with our “7 Ones” text:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

We have talked about the power of one. We have talked about one hope, one body, and the power that they are connected to. We also mentioned the concept of the Trinity that Paul writes about in Ephesians 4. We have already looked at the Spirit and today we are going to study about the one Lord. “Lord” was a common used title by the early church for Jesus, as we will study today.

Personal confession: I like to do things myself. I like to be in control. Maybe you do too. But then I read Ephesians. Read 4.5-6 again. "There is one Lord...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

I have a daughter just like me named Sarah. She *has to* be in control. Maybe you know someone like this. The question I have often asked her when she's acting stubborn is, "Who is in charge?" And she slowly admits, "You are." This verse is God asking us: who is in charge?

Only one of us can be in charge. The power of one is not about my power, my control, my authority; it's about His.

If there is One Lord, then that means I will never be in control. I will always be asked to submit my will to His will. Always. I have to be okay with that; not just "okay", but I have to find peace and joy in it. I need to find comfort and strength in that submission because I, and by extension we as the church, have one Lord, one Master who is in charge.

The truth is we all like to be in control:

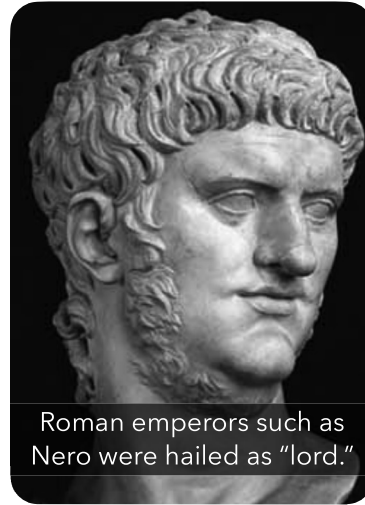
- We all like to know as much information about any situation
- We want to affect the outcome of situations in our lives
- We don't want anyone telling us what to do or think
- We want to be in charge
- We want the boss to ask us what we want to do, or even become our own boss to have more control

We love control and we hate uncertainty. This is a hard lesson for me, and maybe it is for you too.

Part of the reason this is hard for us is because we don't really have "lords" or use that term anymore. But to those to whom Paul was writing, this was a very clear concept. Ephesus was a Roman city and was under the rule of Roman emperors. Paul writes this letter from Rome around AD 60-62 when Nero was emperor. Nero was preceded by four other emperors. Because of the pagan influence during that time, worship of

the emperor as a god was common. "The emperor was the *KYRIOS*, the lord of the world, the one who claimed the allegiance and loyalty of subjects throughout his wide empire."¹ This is the culture they lived in and in a way, it certainly is the culture of our day as well. We may not worship an emperor, but we certainly idolize and worship entertainers, athletes, politicians, and more.

Paul had already written about Jesus as Lord a few years before this when he wrote Romans, and challenges the idea that Caesar



Roman emperors such as Nero were hailed as "lord."

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 1.1-7)

is lord in his opening address to those living and following Christ in Rome:

Paul says that it was by Jesus Christ, through His authority as Lord, that Paul was appointed as an apostle. And then Paul says it again in the end

¹<http://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/paul-and-caesar-a-new-reading-of-romans/>

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Romans 15.4-5)

of Romans, as he brings up our unity as the one body, united with one purpose, under one Lord, to glorify one God:

The understanding that *Jesus* was Lord—and not anyone else—was meant to remind them who had all dominion and power.

Beyond Caesar, there was another group that liked to hold on to power: the Pharisees. They had been respected religious leaders for so long that they had forgotten who the true authority was. It had gotten so bad that when Jesus showed up and proved His power and authority through

On the Sabbath He was going through the grain fields, and His disciples began to make their way picking some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry—how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the sacred bread—which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests—and also gave some to his companions?" Then He told them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

(Mark 2.23-28)

miracles, they still thought they were in charge. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus explained His Lordship to those who thought they were in charge. Do not confuse the humility of Jesus with weakness; there is one Lord.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The Pharisees did not like that. It meant that they were not in charge, and if they could no longer control the Sabbath, then they would never control Jesus. And that was Jesus' point. There is only one Lord.

Mark's version adds this word "even" He is Lord *even* of the Sabbath, meaning there is *nothing* that He is not Lord of. There was only one with power. In John 19.11, Jesus tells Pilate that he (Pilate) only has the power that God has allowed him to have. It is one of the few statements Jesus makes before the cross, and it is meant to remind us of His power and the Lordship of Jesus!

Why is it such a big deal that Jesus is Lord? Why can there only be one Lord? Because it means that we must submit to the will of the one Lord. If Jesus is Lord, then we must serve Him, obey Him, and carry out His commands, and we must always do so without hesitation, grumbling, or complaining, and instead with sacrifice and joy. To be honest, doing that is hard, and often, we don't like hard. We sometimes have a problem with Jesus' commands and we don't want to submit; we want to suggest *new* commands!

But God has never been interested in arguing with us. Maybe you have gone to your parents and tried to explain to them a better way than what they have previously instructed for you to do. But as you are trying to educate your parents with your vast "wisdom", you realize that you do not see everything they do. You don't know everything they know. How

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen. Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any."

(Isaiah 44.6-8)

much more is that true of God? He sees everything we do not. For me, that makes it more than okay for Him to be Lord.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God explains to us why He is the only one who is qualified to be in charge:

We have to quit telling God what we want Him to do with our lives! It is not ours to command; it is only ours to lay down. The word submission is a word we often take the wrong way. It doesn't mean you have no power or choice at all; it means you do have power, but you are *choosing* to lay it down. When we submit to Jesus as our Lord, that means we are laying down our power to choose at His feet. We do that out of love and respect for Him because of who He is.

The One Lord we serve will lead us in the exact way to go. He knows where we are going. When it comes to Jesus, the question is not, "Is Jesus God?" He is, and the gospels plainly teach this. The question is not, "Is Jesus powerful?" He clearly is, as evidenced by His many miracles, His resurrection, and the fact that He served as the agent of creation. The question is this: are you going to submit to Jesus as Lord, or are you going to demand to be in control?

We sing a song called "I'll be a friend to Jesus" with the line, "They tried my Lord and Master," and that is what He is. If you are going to follow Jesus, that is the only arrangement that makes sense, Jesus is our Lord and Master. Power means nothing if everyone has it. If everyone was a superhero would anyone be super? You are connected to power, but it does not originate with you. Only One has the right to rule. That means the rest of us must acknowledge His authority and live humbly under it. Jesus is Lord and I am not, and I am more than okay with that. Are you?

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. What or who do we worship as "lord" in today's times?
2. Why is it so important that Jesus is Lord?
3. Why do you think God wanted us to confess that Jesus is Lord?
4. In what ways can you show that Jesus is Lord in your daily life?

ONE FAITH

EPHESIANS 4.5



ONE Part One: Lesson

We will start again in **Ephesians 4.1-6**:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

What is this one faith that Paul writes about? It does not refer to each and every belief about God or the church that a person may have, but it does refer to a set of core doctrines and teachings that are central to Christianity and necessary for us to believe and follow. “The faith” is the standard by which we act and operate in this life. This one faith unifies a worldwide body of believers taught by the same scriptures. Our faith is precious and for that reason, there is only one faith.

This faith is referenced in the short New Testament epistle of Jude:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

(Jude 1.3)

Jude's letter continues as he talks about those who have come and perverted the faith, the teachings, the gospel, and the grace of God. As he writes about this one faith he says that we are to protect and preserve it: it is our common salvation.

During the time Paul wrote Ephesians, worship of pagan gods was widespread. It was not uncommon to hear different teachings and revelations about their gods from different people. But for the church, despite there being different men teaching in different places at different times, there was one faith, one set of doctrine that had been revealed by God through the Holy Spirit, unifying the body.

What are some of these core beliefs of this one faith? Many of them appear here in this same passage. It contains the understanding that there is one body that we are baptized into, submitting ourselves to live under one Lord, being sustained by one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. We are being led to walk by one Spirit who leads us in all truth contained in this one faith. And we are united by one hope, the gospel, which is grounded in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believing and living out all of these things in our lives leads to the unity that God wants from those who follow Him.

Can you imagine the chaos and dissension that would come from different groups of people believing and teaching different "truths" under the banner of faith? What would we get done if we all believed and followed different things? What would those outside of the body see? Unfortunately, we don't have to *imagine* this because it is the reality today. The understanding of one faith, one set revealed truth, is what God still strives for us to have today. It is based on his understanding of this one faith that led Paul to include what he did in this letter:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

(Ephesians 4.11-14)

The entire charge of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers was to equip the saints for the work of ministry, which builds up the body, so that we will all have unity of the faith! He then mentioned that he wants us to have knowledge of the Son of God and have a foundation that keeps us secure when other doctrine is being taught that is not what God revealed. Paul says that kind of doctrine comes from the deceitful scheming men who are not interested in unifying people by one faith. Instead they want to redefine God's gospel and sell it to others as "the faith" when it is not even close to God's teaching. Unity of the body is impossible without one faith. In other words, we don't all just get to believe whatever we want to and still be one. God says there is only one faith; He is the One who establishes what truth is, not us.

So what does God want us to do with those who speak or hold a different truth or another faith? And what would we see happen if we are truly unified in this world under one faith? Keep reading:

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

(Ephesians 4.15-16)

The faith, this set of God-given teachings, must be shared with others in love, which is a forgiving, unifying agent. Love and truth help us mature in every way. Jesus is the connecting factor within the church you attend, and between your church and the one where I worship, and between our churches and the church that meets in China filled with Christians you have never met. This one faith contains truth that transcends time and space. It is universal for all cultures and all places. It equips us to trust God and serve Him in obedience because we know what He asks, and it helps grow the body being built up by love.

There is only one faith. When we talk about one body, one hope, one Spirit, one Lord, one baptism, and one God and Father, it requires us to have one faith. In fact, we cannot accept anything else on this list without one faith.

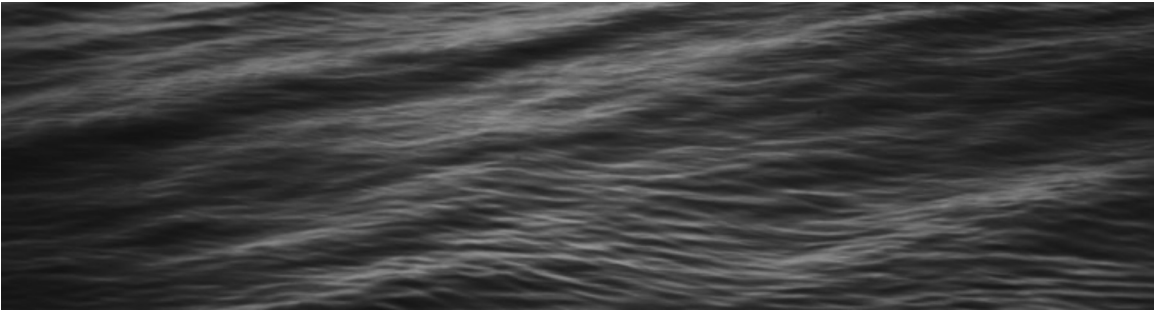
Maybe after hearing this today you realize you need to study the revealed truths of God more. When you do that, you not only bring your faith to maturity, but you also unify yourself more with the body of believers as you come to greater knowledge of the faith. When you understand these truths it deepens your love for God and equips you to share this faith with others as well. There is only one faith.

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. Why can't we have faith in many different things?
2. Is it peaceful knowing there is only one faith?
3. What does one faith cause you to do?
4. Why is it so hard to share faith with other people?
5. In what ways can you live out your one faith?

ONE BAPTISM

EPHESIANS 4.5



ONE Part One: Lesson

Even though we focus on a different “One” each week, hopefully this text is becoming very familiar to you:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

When we start talking about baptism, sometimes we pull it out from this context and hold it up apart from everything else. In fact, I even Googled “one baptism” and I found a link for a church of Christ website that said, “Please give special attention to the expression ‘one baptism.’” We have this tendency to talk about it separately. But here it is together in this group of seven ones. And when we look at it, we find it does not stand apart, but rather, it is at the center of all of them. Why is that? Stay with me:

- **One body:** baptism adds us into the one body.
- **One Spirit:** it is at baptism that we receive the gift of the one Spirit.
- **One hope:** baptism allows us not to grieve as other men, because we are in Christ, and therefore not without hope.
- **One Lord:** in the very act of baptism we proclaim that Jesus is the one Lord to whom we submit our lives.
- **One faith:** it is faith–trust–in the unseen God that leads us to obey Him through baptism.
- **One God and Father:** it is at baptism where we are added to the family of God, adopted as His children, and promised an inheritance with Him.

All of the “ones” we have been talking about are extremely important, but again, it is interesting that we see how baptism interconnects the various elements.

Through baptism we are added to God’s family, His body, the church. In many human families, some of the members were not born into the family but are still a part of the family in some way, perhaps through marriage or adoption. But in those cases, they are still claimed as being *in* the family. Scripture uses the phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” to talk about those who are in the family of God, those He has claimed as His adopted children.

In Matthew 25.31-45, Jesus describes the scene at the judgement and to those who claimed to have known Him and done all these things in His name, Jesus says, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” It is not the one who dies with the right ideas or the good deeds, but the one who is “in Christ” that gets to spend eternity with Jesus.

Why is it important that we are “in Christ”? We know that Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through the Son” (John 14.6), but additionally:

- **Eternal life** does not happen without being **in Christ** (Ephesians 1.7).

- **Forgiveness of sins** comes through being **in Christ** (Ephesians 1.7; 4.32).
- **Every spiritual blessing** comes from being **in Christ** (Ephesians 1.3).
- There is **no condemnation** for those who are **in Christ** (Romans 8.1).
- **In Christ** we are **sons of God** (Galatians 3.26).

There are many more of God's promises that we could add to this list, but these are a few of the major ones, and we should all be able to agree that these are promises that we desperately need!

So the question is how do we get "in Christ"? Romans 6.3 says we are baptized into Christ (see also Galatians 3.26-27). If we are "in" something, then we must have been "out" of it before, and in this case, we must have been "out" of Christ before we were "in" Him. We are put into Christ through baptism. God has placed water baptism between being in Christ and out of Christ. Jesus tells Nicodemus that if he wanted to see or enter the kingdom of God that he had to be born again (John 3.3). He goes on to say that he must be "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3.5).

And this use of water flows through both the Old and New Testaments. 1 Peter 3.18-21 states:

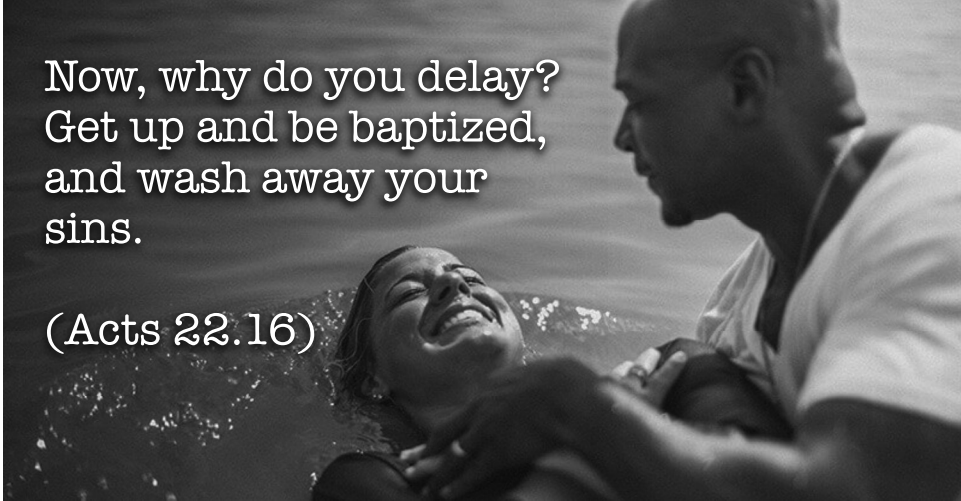
For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

(1 Peter 3.18-21)

This is the same resurrection that is compared to our new life mentioned in Romans 6. In 1 Corinthians 10.1-3, Paul mentions that water baptism was a part of their delivery. In the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5, water was involved in Naaman's healing. Water was also involved with the healing of the blind man in John 9.6-7. Water has been used by God time and time again throughout history as a means of bringing about human salvation and deliverance. God wants us to understand baptism and its part in being one with Him, and He placed it in Scripture over and over again to help us see its importance and not miss out on salvation.

Baptism comes between sin and forgiveness (Acts 2.38; Matthew 26.28). Ephesians 1.7 says, "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (also see Hebrews 9.22). In Acts at least eight examples have baptism included before forgiveness of sins. We see the same pattern of salvation over and over again: hearing the gospel message, believing it and in Jesus, repenting of sins with intent to change, confessing Jesus as Lord, and being baptized "into Christ."

Baptism comes between being saved and lost. Mark 16.16 says, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (see also Galatians 3.26-27; Mark 1.4; Luke 3.3; Acts 2.38; Acts 22.16; 1 Peter 3.21). We can know God's



Now, why do you delay?
Get up and be baptized,
and wash away your
sins.

(Acts 22.16)

plan for us. Conversion story after conversion story in the Book of Acts involves baptism. We have it from the mouth of Jesus and the apostles, and it was modeled in the early church and preached for centuries. Why would God lay out a need for salvation in the Bible without giving a clear way to be saved? Details matter, but baptism is more than a detail; it is a major vein that flows through the Bible. It is central to God's greatest desire, which is for us to be with Him eternally.

Baptism models the physical death of Christ (see Romans 6). And in doing so we model the death that we deserve and enter into the life that Jesus purchased for us. We have to experience both of them.

The power of one can be you right now choosing to be connected with Christ and all that we have been talking about through baptism. Becoming connected to God through baptism is one of the most important choices we can make and share with the people in our lives.

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. Why does God require baptism as part of salvation?
2. What connection does baptism have to the other "ones" in Ephesians 4?
3. Is baptism so complicated that we cannot participate in it?

ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

EPHESIANS 4.6



ONE Part One: Lesson

One last time, we will read through Ephesians 4.1-6 together:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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.

(Ephesians 4.1-6)

We have already discussed the idea of God as Trinity, and as a part of that, have talked about the one Spirit and one Lord; today, we turn our focus to the idea of God the Father. Paul describes God here as the “Father of all”, and also says that He is the One who is “over all and through all and in all.”

Listen to the way that God is described in other places in Scripture:

For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him.

(Deuteronomy 4.32-35)

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

(Deuteronomy 6.4)

How would you describe your father? How would you describe God the Father? You may describe God the Father like you would describe your own father: unique. Your father is one of a kind. There are a lot of dad stereotypes out there but your father is still unique.

But that is about where the similarities between your earthly father and God the Father end. Your father is not God. Your father is not perfect. Your father might have had a part in creating you, but he had zero part in creating and sustaining the universe in which you live. Your father's title ends at "father"; it does not have continue like God's does: "Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." No one can introduce their father to someone and say, "Oh, by the way, this is my dad, who is over all and through all and in all." Nope, he is just "dad".

God, on the other hand, is truly unique. He is truly over all and through all and in all. There is no one like the one God and Father of all.

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

(1 Corinthians 8.5)

Why is it important that Paul tells them that God is over all and through all and in all? To those who may have been reading Paul's letter, pagan worship of other gods was still very common during this time. Pagan gods were believed to only have local power: they may be dedicated to a certain region or location (the city of Ephesus, the sea, etc.), or a certain area of life (having children, doing business, etc.). But Paul says that God is unique, and we see this over and over again in the pages of Scripture. From His creation of everything that exists, to His triumph over Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt through the Exodus, to the humiliation of the Philistine god Dagon in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, to His victory on top of Mt. Carmel over 450 prophets of Baal, the biblical message is clear: God is not a local god. He is over all and through all and in all.

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

(Isaiah 46.9)

As I consider my own role as a father with my children, I want them to be aware of right and wrong and trained to do what is right. God wants the same for us. A father disciplines a son he loves (Hebrews 12.6). Part of that means the father reminds the child of his power, so that when it matters, the child who has been trained properly is saved by it. If a father says, "Stop! There is a car!" to a child who does not acknowledge

the father's authority and does not listen to him, then the outcome could be tragic.

It also says in Hebrews 12 that God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness...and without holiness no one will see God (Hebrews 12.10,14). God the Father disciplines us for our good, because He wants to sustain us. God the Father created us, loves us, and redeemed us. Our Father is trying to save us from the sin we have gotten ourselves into, and He tells us that in order for Him to fix us, we have to surrender and let Him be in charge of our lives.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

(John 19.16b-18; 28-30)

This act of love is something you see from a God who deeply cares, from a Father who loves His children. God is a God who saves. God is a perfect Father who was willing to lay down His life for His children, even when they rejected Him, hated Him, and did not want anything to do with Him. There is only one God and Father like that. His perfection makes Him unique.

Do you see the power of one in the cross? The power of this one man? Jesus, our Lord, carried your sins and my sins to the cross to pay the cost for sin *once* and for all. That is the power of one. If you can't see it there, you will not see it anywhere else.

We need to start thinking in terms the power of one. There is such power in each one moment, and we need to remember God only gives us one moment at a time.

One day there will be a real trumpet and a real Jesus will come back to earth. There will be one judgment, where we will stand before the throne of the one and only God, and one eternity will begin. One is powerful. One is all we get.

Do you obey the one Father? Do you submit to the one Lord? Is the one Spirit living within you?

ONE Part Two: Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important that God describes himself as a Father?
2. How does it change the way you see God to think of Him as a Father?
3. What is dangerous about seeing God as a local god or a god with limited abilities?

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Jeremy Myers was born and raised in Florida. He has spent the last 15 years in ministry and over 20 years in missions, and currently serves as the Youth & Family Minister at the Johnson Church of Christ.

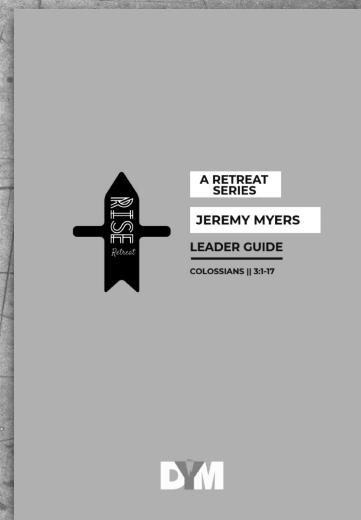
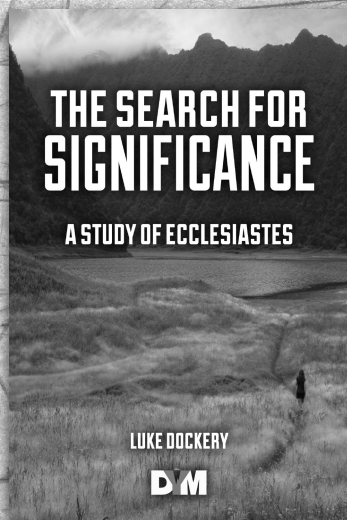
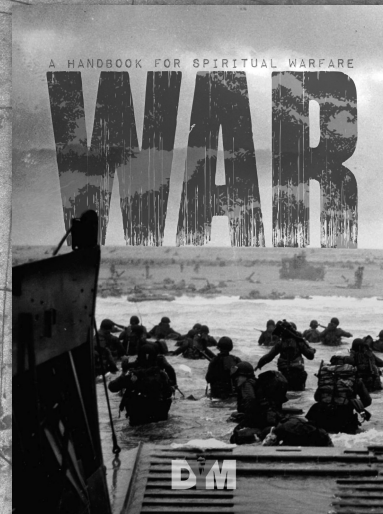
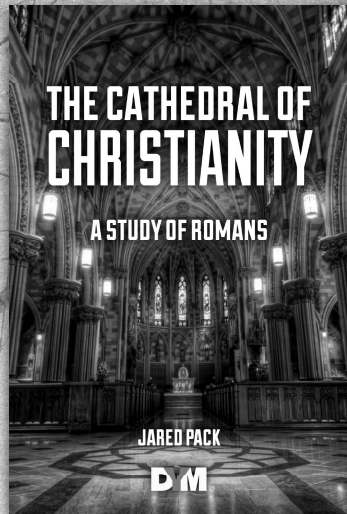
Jeremy holds a B.A. in Youth & Family Ministry and a Masters in Teaching from Harding University. The Lord has blessed him with 15 years of marriage to his wife Leah and three girls: Sarah (10), Laura (6), and Abby (1). Jeremy's day always begins with coffee, but his joy comes from serving God and bringing others to become more like Christ.

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