

## CHAPTER 8

### Ephesians 4:1–6

#### LISTEN to the Story

<sup>1</sup>As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <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.

*Listening to the text in the Story:* Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 15:1–2; 119:1–3; John 17:20–23; Acts 2; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 12:7–26; Galatians 3:27–28; Philippians 2:1–11; Colossians 3:12–17; Philemon; 1 Thessalonians 2:10–12.

The first three chapters of Ephesians tell the story of God’s work in Christ. Chapters 1–2 feature a narrative of God’s activity, beginning before the creation of the world and centered in Jesus Christ, through whom we experience salvation, new creation, and unification. Chapter 3 focuses on God’s revelation to Paul, including the centrality of the church in God’s plan for the cosmos. The narrative of chapters 1–3 is punctuated by two lengthy prayers (1:15–23; 3:14–21), both of which reveal more about what God has done and will do in, through, and for us.

The major transition of Ephesians begins in chapter 4 with a move from narrative to exhortation. Though chapters 4–6 contain rich theological content, they emphasize not so much what God has done as what we should do in response to God’s actions. These chapters reveal what it means for us to “live a life worthy of the calling [we] have received” (4:1).

In Ephesians 1–3 we listen to the story of God who saves us in Christ. In Ephesians 4–6 we are drawn into the story, not just as people for whom God has acted but also as actors in the divine drama. We discover in detail what it [p 117](#) means to exist for the praise of God’s glory (1:14) and how we might walk in the good works God has prepared for us (2:10).

#### EXPLAIN the Story

##### **Summary of Ephesians 4:1–6**

This short passage opens with an exhortation that the recipients of the letter “live a life worthy of the calling [they] have received” (4:1). This serves as a topic sentence not just for 4:1–6 but also for the whole second half of the letter.

Following the main exhortation in verse 1, the next two verses provide some initial details about how we are to live in response to God's call. The charge to maintain the "unity of the Spirit" (4:3) leads into a short, seven-part description of the theological basis for Christian unity.

### **Walk Worthy of Your Calling (4:1–3)**

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you* (4:1). The word "then" (*oun*) underscores the connection between what has gone before in Ephesians and the exhortation that follows. The verb translated as "I urge" is the standard Greek term meaning "to exhort, urge," and it figures regularly in Paul's writings.<sup>2</sup>

The use of "I" in 4:1 draws attention to Paul as the one who issues the exhortation. Many interpreters allege that he is emphasizing his apostolic authority here. Yet it is striking that Paul does not identify himself as an apostle but rather as "the prisoner for [en] the Lord." This is similar to his self-reference in 3:1, "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." On a human level, Paul is a prisoner of Rome (see Introduction). But more importantly, his imprisonment falls under the Lord's superintending sovereignty.

*To live a life worthy of the calling you have received* (4:1). Here is the main exhortation of this passage, indeed, perhaps all of Ephesians. The recipients of the letter are to "live a life" worthy of their calling. "Live a life" paraphrases the Greek verb *peripateō*, which literally means "to walk." This verb has already been used in Ephesians for the sinful behavior of the Gentiles (2:2) and for the good works in which God intends for us to walk (*peripateō*, 2:10). Later in Ephesians the verb "to walk" will be used for our living in a certain way (4:17; 5:2, 8, 15). This use of "to walk" as a metaphor for moral living was part of Paul's Jewish heritage.

**p 118** What is "the calling you have received" or more literally, "the calling with which you were called" (4:1)? Ephesians 1:18 refers to "the hope to which he has called you," which points back to God's plan to unite all things in Christ (1:10). Similarly, 4:4 says "you were called to one hope when you were called." Thus, in Ephesians the language of calling can have a future orientation. It directs our attention to God's purpose for the cosmos, namely, bringing all things together in Christ.

Though the future colors the meaning of calling in 4:1, the metaphor has a broader scope in this passage. Our calling is that which emerges from the whole narrative of Ephesians 1–3. Through this story God has called us to belong to him, to be part of his holy people, and to join in his cosmic plan. As Mark Labberton writes in *Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today*, "God's primary call is for us to belong to and live for the flourishing of God's purposes in the world."

The first three chapters of Ephesians already begin to sketch out the contours of our response to our calling. We are to live as God's holy people, for the praise of his glory (1:1, 4, 12, 14). Having been saved by grace through faith and created anew in Christ, we are to do the good works God has prepared for us (2:10). As God's people unified in Christ, we are to live as stones in God's own temple (2:19–22). Furthermore, through our words and deeds we are to make known to the cosmic powers the manifold wisdom of God (3:10). These contours help to shape the moral exhortation of Ephesians 4–6, which goes into greater detail on how we are to walk in light of our calling.

In 4:1 the passive verb (literally, “you were called”) implies that God is the caller. Our lives are to be lived not according to our personal sovereignty but rather under the sovereignty of the Lord. The plural “you” in 4:1 has a corporate sense. God calls not just solitary individuals but also his people together. We are to live out our individual calling in the context of a community of called people. And we are to live out our communal calling in our individual lives.

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love* (4:2). The NIV, as most English translations in verses 2 and 3, adds several additional imperatives to the command “live a life/walk worthy” in verse 1. In the original language, however, these English imperatives are grammatically dependent on the command in verse 1. They spell out explicitly how we begin to live our lives worthy of our calling.

“Be completely humble” renders a Greek phrase that reads “with all humility.” The word “humility” (*tapeinophrosunē*) means “lowliness of mind” and p 119 was used in secular Greek with a negative force. Among New Testament writers, however, it is a virtue. It involves seeing yourself as you are, without arrogance or self-aggrandizement. In Philippians, Paul bases a call to humility on Christ’s own humbling of himself in his crucifixion (“humility,” *tapeinophrosunē*, in Phil 2:3; the verb “to humble” himself, *tapeinoō*, in Phil 2:8). It is striking that the very first way we live out our calling is by doing something Gentiles scorned.

Linked to humility in Ephesians 4:2 is gentleness. The Greek word *prautēs*, close in meaning to humility, appears among the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. In 2 Corinthians 10:1 gentleness is a quality of Christ. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus describes himself as “gentle and humble in heart [*praus ... kai tapeinos tē kardia*].” The KJV renders *prautēs* in Ephesians 4:2 as “meekness,” though it should not be thought of as weakness but rather as having the strength to humbly serve others.

“Be patient” translates the Greek phrase “with patience [*meta makrothumias*].” *Makrothumia*, which can also mean “forbearance,” is counted among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) as well, and it is a quality of God (Rom 2:4). The exhortation to be patient assumes that our fellow Christians need patience from us, even as we need it from them.

The following phrase fleshes out how we show patience. We are patient by “bearing with [*anechō*] one another in love.” *Anechō* means “endure, bear with, put up with.” Paul uses this verb in 1 Corinthians 4:12 to describe how he endures persecution. Thus the combination of “be patient” and “bearing with one another in love” implies that real life in Christian community is no picnic. Of course, God does not want us to put up with sin: sin needs forgiveness, not endurance (Eph 4:32). But embodying this unity requires hard work, even endurance, as we put up with things in others that bother us, and when they return the favor.

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace* (4:3). In the NIV, verse 3 is an imperative. But in the Greek “make every effort” is a participle, thus linking verse 3 to verses 1 and 2 and expressing another way for us to live out our calling. The verb translated as “make every effort” can mean “hurry, hasten” and has a related sense of “be zealous/eager, make every effort.” Unity is not something to be taken for granted but rather is something to be sought eagerly.

We are to strive to “keep” the unity of the Spirit. The Greek verb translated as “keep” can also mean “watch over, guard.” Notice that we are not p 120 forging Christian unity on our own. Rather, it is something created by the Holy Spirit. We see a vivid picture of this reality in Acts 2, where the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost leads to profound, embodied unity among the

followers of Jesus (Acts 2:42–47). A different picture of unity in 1 Corinthians 12 portrays the Spirit as immersing all Christians into the one body of Christ, thus overriding the cultural and economic divisions between us (1 Cor 12:12–13). Though we do not generate unity among Christians, we are to preserve it energetically.

Our unity as believers is held together “through the bond of peace [*en tō sundesmō tēs eirēnēs*].” In Colossians 3:14 love is the bond of perfection [*sundesmos tēs teleiōtētos*] that keeps the body of Christ together. Ephesians emphasizes peace beginning in 2:14, where Christ “himself is our peace.” Through the cross he created one new humanity, “thus making peace” (2:15). Therefore, the “bond of peace” is a way of speaking about the deep unity among people forged by Christ through his death and made real through the Holy Spirit.

The exhortations of 4:2–3 flow from the injunction to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (4:1). This calling, as we noted earlier, echoes the whole story of God in Ephesians 1–3 even as it highlights our future hope. This hope, according to Ephesians 1:10, is centered in God’s uniting of all things in Christ. Thus it follows that the first steps in our worthy walk should guard the unity of the God’s people. The reconciliation of all things *in the future* is foreshadowed in the reconciliation of believers *in the present*, a demonstration to the cosmos of God’s purposes in Christ.

### **The Theological Basis for Unity (4:4–6)**

In 4:3 we are to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” The following verses provide a theological basis for our unity. The connection between verse 3 and verses 4–6 is seen more clearly in Greek. The word translated in 4:3 as “unity” is *henotēs*, an unusual word that in the New Testament appears only in Ephesians (4:3, 13). The root of the word *henotēs* is *heis*, the Greek word for “one,” which appears repeatedly in verses 4–6 (*henotēs* is based on the genitive form *henos*). So we are to eagerly preserve oneness because our oneness is anchored in the manifold oneness of divine reality. This reality is portrayed through seven—a number representing perfection—“ones” in 4:4–6: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.

*There is one body and one Spirit* (4:4). The “one body” mentioned here is the church, the body of Christ (1:22–23), though the word “church” does not appear in this passage. It is the result of Christ’s reconciling work on the cross [p 121](#) (2:16). The fact that the list of “ones” in this passage begins with the “one body” underscores the importance of the people of God, something that will be developed later in chapter 4. As we noted above, the Holy Spirit not only gives birth to the church, the body of Christ, but also baptizes each member into “one body” (1 Cor 12:13). The oneness of the Spirit provides grounding for diversity in the expression of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7–11). Thus, the association of “one body” and “one Spirit” is based on theological bedrock as well as the actual experiences of Christians in community.

*Just as you were called to one hope when you were called* (4:4). The Greek of this phrase could be rendered more literally, “just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (NRSV). In 1:18 Paul prays that his readers might know “the hope to which he has called you.” This, as we’ve seen, points back to 1:10, where God will unify all things in Christ. Thus when God calls us, he calls us to embrace this particular hope as a matter of confident assurance. Apart from Christ we have no hope (2:12). In Christ, our “one hope” with all other believers includes “eternal life,”

which is much more than life after death for individual believers. Someday we will share together in the transformed new creation, where all things are brought back into wholeness through Christ.

*One Lord, one faith, one baptism* (4:5). In Paul's writings, "Lord" generally refers to Christ (see 1:2, 3, 15, etc.). First Corinthians 8:6 offers a parallel to this passage: "There is but one God, the Father, ... [and] one Lord, Jesus Christ." We hear in this text an echo of the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, the central confession of Judaism: "Hear [*shema*], O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." It is striking, of course, that the earliest Christians as Jews who called God "Lord" applied this title to Jesus, even to the point that "Lord" usually referred to him as distinct from God the Father, though for the Father's glory (see Phil 2:5–11).

The use of "one Lord" in 4:5 with "one Spirit" in 4:4 and "one God and Father of all" in 4:6 shows in broad outline what would later mature into explicitly Trinitarian theology (see also 1:3, 13–14, 17; 2:18, 21–22; 3:16–17).

The "one faith" shared among Christians has both intellectual content (what is believed) and relational context (whom we trust). The use of "one [p 122](#) faith" in 4:5, echoed in the unity of the faith in 4:13, points to the basic beliefs that all Christians share in common.

"One baptism" might refer to the Spirit's work of baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). But it is more likely that "one baptism" signifies the initiation ritual experienced by all who became Christians in the time of Paul. Baptism is one in the sense that it is one basic rite, in which water is central. But more significantly, there is "one baptism" because there is "one faith," signified by baptism, and "one Lord," into whom all are baptized.

*One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all* (4:6). The final "one" of this passage identifies one "God and Father of all." This affirmation once again echoes the Jewish *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (see also 1 Cor 8:6).

God has been identified as Father previously in Ephesians (1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14). In 3:14–15 God is the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name," which draws a connection between God and all groupings of earthly and heavenly beings. Similarly, in 4:6 God is "over all and through all and in all." Though "all" in this context could refer to all church members, it's more likely that "all" picks up the broader connotation found in 1:10 and related verses, where God is uniting all things in Christ. God is "over all" as the sovereign of the universe, the one who created all things. God is "through all and in all." God does not literally dwell in all things, as pantheists believe; rather, he is involved in all things, working his will in all things, and ultimately uniting all things in Christ. Indeed, 4:6 is reminiscent of the doxology of Romans 11:36: "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Although Ephesians 4 begins an extended explanation of how we are to live out our calling, the text reminds us that the dos and don'ts of Christian living must never be separated from the theological foundation of our faith. "Live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (4:1) points back to God's story in Ephesians 1–3. Verse 4:3 urges us to keep unity, a directive that could well stand on its own in light of chapters 1–3. But the exhortation to preserve unity is undergirded by the sevenfold elements of Christian theology. Thus the "is" leads to the "ought"; the indicative leads to the imperative. Or, given the story of Ephesians 1–3, we might say that the narrative implies the imperative.

## LIVE the Story

As we get into specific moral exhortations, it can seem obvious how to live the story. We do what the text says! So in the case of 4:1–6, we choose to walk worthy of our calling. We could go through this passage bit by bit, illustrating [p 123](#) how we might live out each individual imperative. But instead, I would like to focus on two main storylines: *calling* and *unity*.

### Do You Have a Call?

As I sat before my church’s candidates committee, a member asked me, “Mark, do you have a call?” I knew the right answer. I was taking a first step towards ordained ministry, and for this, I needed to be sure that God was “calling me into the ministry.” For its part, the committee needed to validate my “call” if I was to advance as a candidate for ordination.

I grew up in a church that used the language of calling almost exclusively for those who were ordained as pastors. Those who had a “Rev.” in front of their names had been “called” by God to “the ministry.” Missionaries, too, might have been able to claim a divine calling. But the rest of us did not have a call. We were ordinary Christians.

When Lloyd Ogilvie became the pastor of my church, he brought a new language of calling. Lloyd said that according to Scripture, all Christians have been called by God into the ministry of Christ. Some have a particular calling to ordained ministry, but every single Christian is called.

Lloyd didn’t make this up; he got it from Ephesians 4. In his preaching he showed that according to 4:1, all Christians are to walk worthy of their calling. Therefore, all Christians are called. Yet when I appeared before the candidates committee, even though Lloyd had been the church’s pastor for ten years, the committee members still used the language of calling as if it applied exclusively to ordained pastors. When I was asked if I had a call, if I had answered, “Of course I do. All Christians are called by God into ministry,” I would not have been applauded for my insight. Language traditions do not quickly or easily change.

Why does this matter? Because if our language implies that only a few select Christians are called by God, then the vast majority of believers may fail to hear or respond to the call that is truly theirs. They will not be prepared to walk worthy of their calling because they never knew they had one.

### Vocation and Vocations

Our word *call* comes from a Germanic root. *Vocation*, which has a similar meaning, is a Latin-based word from *vocatio*, which means “summons, invitation.” In common English we use *vocation* for “occupation, job, career,” but in theology too we may speak of a “vocation.” In his book *Visions of Vocation*, Steven Garber writes, “The word *vocation* is a rich one, having to address the wholeness of life, the range of relationships and responsibilities. Work, yes, but also families, and neighbors, and citizenship, locally and globally—all of [p 124](#) this and more is seen as vocation, that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God. It is never the same word as *occupation*, just as *calling* is never the same word as *career*.”

To be sure, our divine vocation relates to our work, whether it be paid or unpaid. Given that most of us spend the majority of our waking hours working, we must walk worthy of our calling

in and through our jobs. But Garber is right. Our vocation, our calling from God, isn't just about work. It touches and transforms all of life. As Mark Labberton writes in *Called*: "The vocation of every Christian is to live as a follower of Jesus today. In every aspect of life, in small and large acts, with family, neighbors and enemies, we are to seek to live out the grace and truth of Jesus. This is our vocation, our calling. Today."

This notion of vocation, expressed so eloquently by Labberton, has had a major impact on my life and, indeed, my occupation. For two years I oversaw *The High Calling*, a digitally based outreach of the Texas-based H. E. Butt Family Foundation. Our purpose was to help people understand and live out their high calling to serve God in all of life, especially in their daily work.

Meanwhile at Fuller Seminary in California, this ideal of vocation was taking center stage. When Mark Labberton became president of Fuller in 2013, he announced a new, school-wide emphasis on vocation and formation. Fuller would continue to educate pastors, missionaries, and a wide variety of Christian leaders. Yet it would do so with a new focus on helping its students discover their true vocation (following Jesus) and learn how to walk worthy of this central calling in their particular vocations (jobs). Fuller would not just educate its students but would intentionally help them to be formed in Christ for their vocation in the world. Fuller grads who became pastors would be equipped to help all of their people discover their true vocation and learn how to live this out in every part of life, including their occupations. Fuller grads who became entrepreneurs, teachers, filmmakers, and bankers would live out their vocation in the context of their work.

As an example, take Elizabeth, who graduated with a master's degree. Though she had worked in more traditional ministry settings in the past, she sensed that she should live out her calling in a different direction. So Elizabeth founded an educational organization called Mary Lee Kitchen that seeks to help people learn about food and eat in a way that is healthy, sustainable, and inclusive of all people. For Elizabeth, her vocation to love and serve the Lord is expressed in her specific vocation centered in education, food, and health. Her seminary education helped her to discover and live out her calling in a distinctive way.

**p 125** As I watched this new vision of a vocation-centered seminary education play out at Fuller, I was thrilled, believing it to be one of the most important things happening among Christians today. So in my role with *The High Calling*, I arranged to have our film crew spend time at Fuller, interviewing Mark Labberton and others who were leading the vocation and formation charge. During this filming, Mark and I began a conversation that led in a most unexpected direction. Six months after our video project at Fuller, I joined the seminary as the Executive Director of the Max De Pree Center for Leadership. One of the main reasons for this change in my occupation was my desire to join the people at Fuller as they seek to instill a biblical vision of vocation among Christians throughout the world. So you might say that my vocation/calling to follow Jesus took me to a new and unanticipated vocation/occupation.

My story is not unique. Millions of Christians have experienced something like this in their lives. As they have sought to live out their calling, God has led them in unexpected directions. This is true of not just those who work in explicitly Christian organizations. The world is full of teachers, salespersons, carpenters, nannies, lawyers, stay-at-home moms, and entrepreneurs whose lives have been redirected when they chose to walk worthy of their calling. Yet at the same time, millions of other believers have not experienced major job changes when they began

to take their vocation seriously. Rather, for many, their current situations became infused with new significance and purpose.

I think, for example, of a Chinese man I'll call "Sam." He owns a substantial business with a global reach. Sam has shaped his business as an expression of his faith in Jesus. The fundamental values of his organization, which reflect the exhortations of Ephesians 4:1–6, have allowed Sam to build a flourishing business as well as to bear witness to the gospel. His life as a business executive is an expression of his divine calling every bit as much as what he does in his personal life. Sam is called by God just as you and I are called by God.

## **Eager to Keep the Unity of the Spirit**

Ephesians 4:3 says we are to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit." This means much more than to recognize the invisible, spiritual unity of all Christians. Rather, this verse urges us to eagerly desire and diligently pursue the actual unity of God's people wherever and however we can.

The history of the Christian church is not a glorious tale of unity. Rather, we see the people of God dividing over various matters of faith and practice. Such division often happens in small scale, between two members of a church, and sometimes in large scale, between whole churches or denominations.

My own denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA, is currently in disarray when it comes to unity. For the last several years, many churches [p 126](#) have left the denomination over theological disagreements. In the process, dozens of churches have been divided, often splitting lifelong friends and fellow believers.

Because I did some writing about church unity, sometimes people in churches considering leaving the denomination have sought my input. On one occasion I met with a group of a dozen leaders from a church in a discernment process. They began by expressing their unhappiness with the denomination and several of its theological positions. After they were finished, I thought it might be good for them to consider how a commitment to unity might affect their thinking, so I said, "I have one simple question for you. Here it is. Have you made every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?"

Now, I expected them to respond with some version of "Yes." After all, many churches have tried for years to maintain fellowship with a denomination that theologically is moving further and further away from biblical teaching. I thought the leaders of this church would tell me about all they had done to keep the unity of the Spirit. Instead, they were angry with me for even suggesting that unity might be a higher goal. When I mentioned that this wasn't my idea, that I got it right from Scripture, they became even more perturbed. It seemed that they wanted out of the denomination without grappling with the very Bible they thought was being ignored by the denomination.

This does not mean, of course, that all those who work for denominational unity do so in a way consistent with Ephesians 4:1–6. I have seen people fight for their version of church unity in a way that is not humble or gentle. They are not bearing with their denominational opponents in love. So while supposedly seeking the unity of the church, their behavior damages that very unity.

Though it's right for us to consider church unity on a global scale, and though denominational reconciliation can be a worthy goal, support for large-scale unity must be matched by small-scale

unifying actions. If I contend for institutional unity but fail to be humble and gentle, then I am not living my life worthy of my calling.

Throughout my pastoral experience, I have seen church leaders act in ways that promote unity. These “unifiers” were always seeking to walk worthy of their calling in their daily lives, in their ordinary relationships. They were practicing humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance.

I think, for example, of an elder named Tim in my former church. Tim is not by nature humble and gentle. He was a fighter pilot in Vietnam before he became a successful lawyer who once argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. Tim is strong and tough. Yet he seeks to live worthy of his calling as one eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

**p 127** Once in a meeting of the board of elders of my church, Tim proposed that the church display the American flag during worship services. Many Presbyterian churches do this, he explained. He did not see the flag as a distraction from the true worship of God. Rather, for Tim it was a reminder to pray for the country. He realized this would be a new step for our church, but Tim thought it would be helpful.

The first elder who responded to Tim didn’t like his idea. A man I’ll call Dave began his rebuttal, “That’s exactly what Hitler did in Nazi Germany.” Now in my experience, playing “the Hitler Card” rarely contributes to church unity. Then Dave added insult to injury with several other strongly worded criticisms. Tim was not pleased, yet he managed to hold his tongue. After a bit more conversation, we decided to table the matter.

Tim was angry, not so much because Dave didn’t like his idea, but because Dave compared it to Hitler. I encouraged Tim to take time to pray about what he should do in response. As he prayed, Tim received a heart of compassion for Dave. He decided to approach Dave as a brother in Christ, reaching out to him humbly and gently, showing patience and forbearance. Tim did not begin his first conversations with Dave by focusing on the flag issue. Rather, he sought to get to know Dave as a person, learning about his family, his work, his hobbies, etc. As Tim did this, a true friendship began between two men who might well have been at each other’s throats. Their personal unity affected the board of elders, and through the elders, the whole church. In the end, our discussion about the flag was not heated, and we found a way to remind ourselves to pray for our country in worship while taking Dave’s concerns seriously.

This story has a happy ending because Tim, and then Dave in response, chose to live their lives worthy of their calling. Tim’s commitment to being humble, gentle, patient, and forbearing made a difference, drawing Dave into a similar posture. Thus when confronting a disagreement that could have divided the church, these two leaders preserved and enhanced our unity.

No matter what we do in life, every one of us has a chance to live worthy of our calling, to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, and thus to live for the praise of God’s glory. We don’t have to wait for some momentous opportunity. Rather, we can live out our calling in our everyday relationships at work and at home, among our neighbors and fellow church members, in our towns and cities, and in every part of life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark D. Roberts, *Ephesians*, ed. Scot McKnight, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 116–127.