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Word Wise Wednesday – V1, EP3

The Power of "One" (ἓν, *hen*) in Ephesians 4:1-16

Imagine being part of a sports team. Each player has a different role—there's the goalie, the striker, and the defenders. While each person is important, the team must play as one unit to succeed. If the goalie decides to play striker or the defenders abandon their post, the team falls apart. In much the same way, Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminds us that, as believers, we are all part of one body, and our unity is essential for fulfilling our calling in Christ.

In Ephesians 4:1-16, the word "one" (ἓν, *hen*) is used repeatedly to emphasize unity within the Christian community. Paul urges the believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, highlighting seven aspects of oneness: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). The Greek word ἓν signifies not just numerical oneness but unity of purpose and being.

According to *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, the word "one" in these verses stresses the interconnectedness and inseparability of believers in Christ. This oneness does not mean uniformity, where everyone is the same, but unity in diversity, where each member of the Church has different gifts yet contributes to a singular mission—the building up of the body of Christ (Freedman, 1992). The repeated use of "one" highlights how essential unity is to the health of the Church.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis explains that ἓν in Ephesians 4 highlights how believers, though diverse in gifts and backgrounds, are unified by their faith in Christ (Brown, 1986). Paul is not just describing theoretical unity; he is calling believers to actively maintain this unity through humility, gentleness, patience, and love (Ephesians 4:2). In his letters, Paul often emphasizes unity in the body of Christ, using ἓν to remind believers that they are one in purpose, empowered by the same Spirit.

Additionally, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* notes that in Ephesians 4, the word "one" (ἓν) reflects the central theme of Christian unity. It is "a term that expresses the indivisible nature of the Church, emphasizing its connection through the Spirit to Christ, the Head" (Vine, 1996). Unity is essential to the Church's ability to grow and thrive.

Application to Everyday Life

So, what does this mean for us today? As followers of Christ, we live in a world that seems to celebrate division more than unity. Our workplaces, social groups, and even churches can often be marked by competition, disagreements, or misunderstandings. It can be easy to forget that we are called to be *one* body, unified in purpose and spirit.



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Just like a sports team works together for victory, we, as believers, must work together to fulfill God's mission for His Church. This doesn't mean we all need to be the same or think the same. God has given each of us unique gifts to contribute to the body of Christ. But it does mean that we need to prioritize unity. Ephesians 4 calls us to live out that oneness by being patient with one another, showing humility, and bearing with one another in love.

When we embrace our identity as *one* in Christ, the Church becomes a powerful witness to the world. Instead of division, we show a unity that reflects the heart of God—one body, one Spirit, one hope. As *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* points out, this unity is "a reflection of God's desire for His people to be joined together as one" (Freedman, 1992). Let's strive to live in the oneness that Paul speaks of, knowing that when we are unified, we are stronger, and our witness is clearer. Whether in our churches, homes, or workplaces, let us remember the power of "one" and seek to live in harmony with one another for the glory of God.

References

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