

The Body of Christ: Growing in Unity

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EPHESIANS 4:7-14

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Core Competency:

Spiritual Gifts- I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts. (Rom 12:4-6)

Using This Study

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? The words God uses to communicate really matter, so pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in the passage.

② DISCOVER His Word

What does God MEAN? Answer the questions and then bring to your COMMUNITY GROUP to discover and discuss with others.

③ LIVE His Word

How does this truth FIT? God's word is lived in real life so engage with truth in your LIFE GROUP.

Introduction

The Christian faith, more than any other, is based on doctrine. In this week's text, Paul describes how God's intention to preserve unity in the Church is by providing it with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. These individuals use their gifts to serve the Church by providing sound teaching that grow people in the faith and in the knowledge of God (Eph 4:13).

Some Christians view the word "doctrine" as almost a curse word. The thought process is essentially "doctrine is to be avoided because doctrine causes division among Christians, and God desires Christians to be united as it says in John 17:21. The doctrines of the deity of Christ (John 1:1, 14), the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21), the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:17), and salvation by grace through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) are absolutely essential and non-negotiable. If any of these doctrines is removed, the faith is empty, void and lacks biblical unity.

There are other doctrines in the Christian faith that are very important, such as the Trinity, the inspiration of Scripture, and the reality of the eternal state. If Christian doctrine is causing division on any of these points, so be it, as those who deny these doctrines need to be separated from. We should not divide over non-essential issues, at least not to the extent of questioning the validity of another person's faith.

While it is true that doctrine does cause division, if the division is due to a disagreement over an important biblical teaching, division is not necessarily a bad thing. Paul declares, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3). Titus 1:9-2:1 proclaims, "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it...But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."

This Week

God gifted the Church in the past apostles and prophets. Today the faith is transferred through the ministries of evangelists and pastor-teachers "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son" (Eph4:13).

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? The words God uses to communicate really matter, so pay close attention to the details emphasized or repeated in the passage:

Read Eph. 4: 7-16

7 Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the Messiah's gift.

8 For it says: When He ascended on high, He took prisoners into captivity; He gave gifts to people.

9 But what does "He ascended" mean except that He descended to the lower parts of the earth?

10 The One who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

11 And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

12 for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness.

14 Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.

15 But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head —Christ.

16 From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

② DISCOVER His Word

What does God MEAN? Answer the following questions and then bring to your COMMUNITY GROUP to discover and discuss with other.

1. What is the "grace" Christ has given to each believer (verse 7)? See Ephes. 4:12; Romans 12:4-6.
2. What purpose could Paul have for immediately following this statement with the explanations in Ephes. 4:8-9?
3. In what way do the teaching of the apostles, prophets, and pastor-teachers help preserve the unity in the Body?
4. What are the chief signs of spiritual maturity (verses 13-15) and immaturity (verse 14) in the faith?
 - a) maturity
 - b) immaturity

5. How does Paul's definition of Christian maturity in verse 14 stand in contrast to others you have heard or believed?

6. Based on context, what is meant to speak the truth in love? Why do you think people are reluctant to confront somebody about doctrinal error?

7. Based on the implications of this passage should we pursue unity at the expense of doctrine? Why or why not?

8. Look again at Paul's metaphor (image, picture, analogy) for the Church in verses 15-16. What does this description suggest to you about:
 - c) your own spiritual growth?

 - d) the collective growth of all believers in the Body of Christ?

Sermon Notes:

③LIVE His Word

How does this truth FIT? God's word is lived in real life so engage with truth in your LIFE GROUP.

What equipping for "works of service" do you think you most need right now?
How could you seek it?

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I live life with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away God's money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.