

The Body of Christ: Walking in Unity

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EPHESIANS 4:17-32

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Core Competency:

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

Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude, praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

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 LIFEGROUP.

Introduction

In our contemporary secular culture, a codependent person is defined as one who enables a person to continue in his or her destructive behavior, such as alcohol or substance abuse. The difference between a codependent person and a tolerant person is determined by the nature of the behavior of the other person: If the behavior is seen as moral and nondestructive to herself and others, then the confronting person is considered tolerant; if the behavior is immoral and destructive to herself and others, then the confronting person is considered codependent.

Consider this foundational question: Does the Christian faith offer a basic set of beliefs, values, practices, and virtues that can be classified as absolutely true and totally essential for a constructive and fruitful life? If one holds a high view of the validity of the Bible as God's revealed word and his will, then the answer would most definitely be yes. Look closely at the rich and inspired writings of the apostle Peter:

His [God's] divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Pet 1:3-4)

There is a basic and essential set of beliefs, values, practices, and virtues set out in the Bible, while still leaving room for disagreement on the nonbasic and nonessential issues. Robert Wuthnow suggests that one of the major problems with the Church in America is that people do not enter with a common understanding and commitment to these basic tenets of the Christian faith. They may acknowledge that their church has a doctrinal statement of beliefs, but often they do not understand the relationship of these beliefs to daily life and therefore are not really committed to them for everyday living. Therefore, these beliefs have no real practical presence or influence in the Church. Everyone has their own individual idea, or absence of an idea, as to what the Christian life is all about; consequently, it becomes difficult for the individual to achieve that which he or she either doesn't personally know about or doesn't share in common with the other members of the team.

This Week

Learn this week that growing in unity means believers grow into a unified set of beliefs related to their new identity.

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 Ephesians 4:17-32

17 Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts.

18 They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts.

19 They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

20 But that is not how you learned about the Messiah,

21 assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus.

22 You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires;

23 you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds;

24 you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

25 Since you put away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another.

26 Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger,

27 and don't give the Devil an opportunity.

28 The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need.

29 No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.

30 And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption.

31 All bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander must be removed from you, along with all malice.

32 And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

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. Paul warns believers in verse 17 NOT to walk as Gentiles (unbelievers) walk-- "in the futility of their thoughts."
 - a) Identify and explain the two "unifying factors" (v. 18) that exclude people from the life of God:
 - b) Comparing v. 19 with Gal 4:8; Col 1:21; Jn 3:19; explain in your own words why or how a "darkened" mind occurs:
2. How does Paul statement in vv. 20-21 relate to what he already explained in vv. 11-16?

3. Paul describes in vv. 22 – 24 the basis for Christians walking in unity
 - a) Christians are given a new identity (v. 22). How does the believer's new identity in Christ contribute to walking in unity as a church?
 - b) Christians need to grow in the knowledge of the new identity (v. 23; cf. Rom 12:2; Col 3:9). How could a renewal of the mind about one's identity contribute to the church walking in unity?
 - c) Based upon a renewal of mind, Christians can walk consistent with/in their new identity (v. 24; cf. Rom 8:5-6). How does a believer walking in their new identity (putting on the new self), contribute to the church walking in unity?
4. Can you find any clues in 4:25-28 as to why Paul gave this command? Think in terms of the kind of perspective on life Paul wanted the Ephesians to have.
5. Read Matthew 12:33-37. How might Jesus' insight help us to understand why Paul commanded Ephes. 4:22-24 before 4:25-32?

Sermon Notes:

③LIVE His Word

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

Ephesians 4: 26-27 implies that unresolved anger “gives the Devil and opportunity.” What does Paul mean? How could this be explained?

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.