

The Church Is A Body – Part 2

Ephesians 4:1-16

Icebreaker:

Psalm 133:1 says, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.” Share a time when you experienced the blessing of unity in your life.

The Study:

As we move into the second half of Ephesians, Paul begins to get very practical in his instruction. He does this in many of his letters – spends the first part heavily focused on teaching doctrine, then shifts into discussing how this doctrine should impact our behavior. In the first part of chapter 4, he returns to the metaphor of comparing the church to a body. In chapter 2, when he first introduced this metaphor, it was to point out the beautiful *diversity* of the Church. Now he uses it to point out the *unity* the Church is meant to experience.



3 Ways To Show Unity In The Church

Vss.1-6: Behaviors That Promote Unity

1. Though Paul is in chains under the power of Rome, he calls himself a “prisoner of the Lord”. What is significant about him saying this?

In what sense are we also ‘prisoners of the Lord’? Read Luke 17:10 and 1 Cor.6:19-20, then write some thoughts down.

How can calling to mind this truth more often mitigate conflict in my life?

2. Paul lists several other behaviors in this section. For each one, write one sentence that explains how that behavior – if practiced – would promote unity in the church.

Humility:

Gentleness:

Patience:

Forbearance:

3. Paul says we’re to “be eager to maintain” unity (ESV), or “make every effort to keep unity” (NIV). Why does unity require work, effort and sacrifice to achieve and maintain?

Vss.7-13: We Are To Show Unity In Our Service To Christ

4. Another thing that unifies us is that each believer is given spiritual gifts from Christ to use for building up the body of Christ. Read verse 7, then compare it with Romans 12:6-9 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. What common themes are found in these verses?

5. In verse 11, he mentions a number of leadership positions in the Church (i.e. the 'clergy'), then gives their job description in verse 12. What is shocking about this job description, compared to how most people today think of the work that the 'clergy' are meant to do?

6. In the Old Testament, priests were the ones who were to minister to others, take people's confessions of sin, and pray for them. Notice what is missing in this list of clergy. Why do you think this is? (For clues to guide you, look up 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:5-6, James 5:16).

7. While there are important resources available (e.g. the SHAPE model, the FULL Member concept) to help us discover areas where we can serve the Lord in ministry, it's not too complicated actually. We can just "look out the window", and "look in the mirror". What do we mean by this?

8. Jot down three ways that you think right now you could serve the Lord to make his body, the Church, stronger.

Vss.14-16: We Are To Show Unity By Growing In Our Doctrine And Knowledge Of The Faith

9. Why is it important to rally around common, shared doctrines of the faith? Read and discuss 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

10. Look through a copy of Bridgeway's *Statement Of Faith*. This is a list of doctrines we would consider "core, non-negotiable" beliefs. These are "hills that we would die on". Share some observations.

Can you think of other doctrinal areas that are less black & white, and more gray, where Christians can "agree to disagree" what is the truth?

How can the phrase "be narrow in doctrine but broad in fellowship" be helpful in navigating our doctrinal disagreements?

11. "Speak the truth in love", Paul writes in verse 15. Are you more a "love giver" or a "truth teller"? Why do we need to be able to operate in both spheres?

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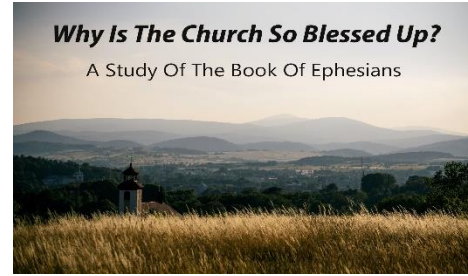
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