

Ephesians

More than a Makeover

What Does It Take to Keep Unity Alive?

Ephesians 4:1-6

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / December. 8, 2024

I. God Calls Us To Make Unity A Priority

Ephesians 4:3 "...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

NIV "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."

NASB "...being diligent to preserve the unity..."

The verbs in this verse signal to us that this will not be easy or automatic, yet we continue being surprised at how hard it is and how much time it takes. Paul says you're going to have to make every effort and you'll have to be eager and diligent about this.

The word "diligent" indicates you're going to have to work on it again and again and again because it will not just happen by Christians being in close proximity with each other.

II. God Calls Us To Keep Working On Something That The World Cannot Ignore – Unity In The Midst Of Diversity

This passage is all about biblical unity, not uniformity. Cults insist on uniformity and get it done with powerful personality, guilt, or intimidation, but Christians are called to unity and we do it by the power of His Spirit who helps us focus on what matters most - His bride and His message.

Unity comes from within. Uniformity is the result of outside pressure.

In **v. 4-6**, Paul highlights what makes us the same and it has nothing to do with outside pressure or current cultural issues that we agree on.

Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Paul is giving the objective basis or ground on which our unity rests as he uses the word "one" 7x: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all!

III. God Tells Us What It'll Take To Keep This Unity Alive

Ephesians 4:2 "...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love..."

A. Cultivate Humility In The Midst Of Your Strong Convictions

Ephesians 4:2 "...with all humility..."

These three words fly in the face of our culture today because people have made an idol out of self.

“If you have put yourself in the center of your world, in the digital or personal community, *you will tend to be a divisive, not a unifying, presence.* People who make life all about them obviously don’t interact with attention to, love for, and appreciation for others. They live with unrealistic expectations (life and people will serve me), so they experience constant disappointment and the anger that follows. Being right, being affirmed, being on the winning side, controlling the conversation, putting people in their place, and getting attention are more important than encouraging the community’s unity...Making life all about you doesn’t lead to unity. Personalizing what is not personal doesn’t lead to unity. Being adversarial in your reactions doesn’t lead to unity. Not being able to handle disagreement doesn’t lead to unity. Resisting correction doesn’t lead to unity. Too much love for winning doesn’t lead to unity. The key to unity, which the Bible presents as a treasured and essential quality for the family of faith, is selflessness.”

~ Paul David Tripp, *Reactivity: How the Gospel Transforms our Actions & Reactions*

Paul leads out with “all humility” in **v. 2** because it’s going to take a ton of this to make this whole thing work and without truckloads of humility, you’ll never have unity!

It doesn’t matter how much you know, how much you can do, or how gifted you are to do it, if you don’t go into it with all humility you’ll do more harm than good.

Study, pray, and think hard so that you can come to a personal conviction about issues, but then hold that conviction with a hand of humility and a heart of love that is keeping two things in mind that only humility would keep in mind:

#1 - I could be wrong.

#2 - God could actually lead other believers who love Jesus as much or more than I do to think and choose differently.

B. Recognize That Your Strength Becomes Destructive Unless It’s Harnessed With Meekness

Ephesians 4:2 “... and gentleness...”

This passage is talking about strongly gifted people that God gave to the Church, but that strength has to be a strength under control, not out of control!

This is an age-old struggle for as long as the Church has been alive in our world. The tragedy of Christians attacking each other in past few years is not a new thing.

“No wild beasts are as dangerous to man as Christians are to each other.”

~ Julian, *Against the Galileans*

The Greek word for “gentleness” or “meekness” in **v. 2** refers to a powerful animal – like an ox or a stallion – that has been trained and domesticated so that it’s now under control instead of out of control. Being under control is useful and being out of control is destructive in animals and people!

Galatians 5:14-15 “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”

There’s always been the very real and tragic possibility that Christians would actually bite and devour each other! Paul says, “Watch out! Don’t do it!”

C. Be Passionate But Patient With Other People Who Don’t See Things The Way You Do

Ephesians 4:2 “... with patience, bearing with one another in love...”

The Greeks have more than one word for “patient.” Paul used the Greek word “makrathumia” that was focused exclusively on being patient with people.

In **v. 2** he’s not talking about bearing one another’s burdens. He’s talking about something even harder. He’s talking about when other people are the burden you’re called to bear.