

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Our Mission: Reaching Out to Leaders Who Can Change the World.

May 2013

Ephesians: God's Plan For His Church

Lesson #7: Body Unity

INTRODUCTION

What tends to get in the way of believers' unity in the church?

EXPLORATION

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Note: The first three chapters of Ephesians set forth truth about the believer's (positional) identity in Christ, and the last three call for the practical (truth) response. Some say the blessings come with obligations and responsibilities. Others say that Christianity is simply the process of becoming what we (really) are. ¹

1. Paul exhorts them to live worthy of the *calling* they have received. What's his point? Rom 8:28.

Eph 3:10; 3:21, Phil 1:27, Col 1:10, 1 Th 2:12

Note: Verse 2 - humility - lowliness, willing to take little honor or to give higher place to another, absence of pride and self assertion. Gentleness- accept treatment without bitterness or resistance, strength under control. Patience – longsuffering, wide soul. Bearing with one another - tolerance of faults of others which springs from humility, gentleness and patience.

2. Are these “being” or “doing” commands? How is this different than “acting” like a Christian?

3. How can these traits help us fulfill the command of verse 3?

Note: the Scriptures tell us that we are not to be so long-suffering that we never rebuke, admonish or exhort. At the same time, however, the characteristic spirit of one who is being led by the Spirit of God is to be non-judgmental. ²

4. What is the basis for our unity as believers?

Note: Verse 5 baptism is probably referring to water baptism (Rom 6:3-4) which, in Paul's day, was usually done the same way (submersion). It was an outward expression for Christians to distinguish themselves as followers of Christ, similar to the way that the Jews had circumcision to distinguish themselves. It may also be referring to the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), the regeneration by the Holy Spirit, which is inward and therefore invisible.

5. In verses 4-6, Paul uses the word *one* seven times. How do these truths affect our unity in Christ?

6. How can we be “one in Christ” and not all alike?

7. How is our unity affected – positively or negatively – by the diversity in the body of Christ?

8. What does Paul say is the purpose for the various gifts & roles in the church?

9. How can we know the difference between church doctrine, practice and preference? (v. 14)

10. How does *speaking the truth in love* (verse 15) contribute to our unity in Christ?

11. What are some of the challenges to *speaking the truth in love*?

APPLICATION

How would others rate your spiritual maturity? Your ability and willingness to speak the truth in love? Your unity with other believers?

Thoughts On Humility – Essential To Our Unity

Humility is not thinking lowly of myself, but highly of God, resulting in an accurate (humble) view of myself. Humility is the quiet acquiescence to the will of God.

“A man cannot think highly of himself and God at the same time.”

– Flavel, a Puritan writer.

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1986). *Ephesians*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (116). Chicago: Moody Press.

² Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (98–99). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.