

B O T T O M L I N E

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SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4:4-7; John 17; John 13: **unity**.

This is our core passage for this week...

Ephesians 4:4-6

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Have you ever had a prayer go unanswered? Something you prayed for and it never came to pass? Just before Jesus went to the cross he prayed this prayer.

John 17:20-21

²⁰ "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

In the hours leading to Jesus' death He prayed a prayer of hope, that everyone who believes in Him would be UNITED. Sadly, Jesus' prayer has gone unanswered.

Why do Christians find it so hard to be unified? Don't you think it's kind of an embarrassment that we can't seem to agree?

We get it right sometimes, but more often than not we are not unified.

It hasn't always been like this as a matter of fact...

The early church sprang up within the Roman Empire, which was deeply divided across ethnic, geographic, gender, and political lines.

And the church was the only organization that crossed those lines.

The truth is, we all have a little different way of interpreting scripture and that causes divisions and sometimes even entire denominations.

I think we end up making things way too complicated.

Paul had a remarkable ability to reduce the most complicated ideas into to a singular truth that you can put in your pocket and take with you.

Today we are going to look at another of Paul's

B O T T O M L I N E truths that will make a world of difference.

UNITY:

GOD'S PRAYER FOR ALL OF US

GOD'S HOPE FOR ALL BELIEVERS

So what clues does Ephesians 4 give us when it comes to Unity? Let's go back to the beginning of the chapter...

Ephesians 4:1-2

¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

UNITY STARTS WITH **THE HEART**.

If we want to live in unity with others it starts with our hearts. Look at the language listed here in verses 1 & 2.

Worthy life. Calling. Completely humble. Gentle. Patient. Bearing with one another. Love.

The reason we are not unified is because our hearts are not right.

Before Paul gets into the seven ones of unity, he makes the case for our hearts to be right.

We see this in the story of Moses and Pharaoh...

God sends Moses and Aaron to the Pharaoh to tell him to let the people of Israel out of Egypt. 10 times Moses goes and 10 times the Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go.

Each time God sends a plague, but still Pharaoh would not agree. Why?

Exodus 7:22

²²But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.

The Bible says his heart became hard. He would not agree. He would not compromise.

Unity starts in the heart.

Where is your heart hardened to something that would keep you from Unity? God wants to free us from that kind of bondage.

1 Peter 3:8-9

⁸Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with

blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

If we are going to find UNITY, it starts in our hearts.

Ephesians 4:11-13

³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

UNITY GROWS THROUGH **THE SPIRIT.**

The Holy Spirit who lives in us is one of the keys to unity.

Follow me here. God is ONE.

Father. Son. Spirit.

Without unity we would not have ONE God. We would have three.

One heart. One mind. One purpose. From the very beginning, the Godhead has functioned as ONE.

Genesis 1:1-2

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Genesis 1:26a

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image,

Colossians 1:15-16

¹⁵The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

Who was it talking about in Genesis 1 when the verse said, "let US make man in OUR image?"

In just a couple verses we can tie together all three parts of the Godhead as a part of creation.

All three active and working together since creation.

One heart. One mind. One purpose.

If we are to live in Unity, then we must allow God's Spirit to move us each day closer to God's heart, mind and purpose.

We will never find unity with each other if we are not first on the same page with God.

True friends face in the same direction, toward common projects, interests, goals.
– C.S. Lewis

If we are ever going to make a difference in this world, we must face in the same direction as God, then others.

Ephesians 4:2-7

²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

So Paul says, first get your heart right. Then get in step with the Spirit, which will put you in step with God... Father, Son & Spirit.

Then recognize that we are to be unified... one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.

Christ doles out grace. Jesus measures out grace. Some may need more than others. Jesus makes the decision and gives it out.

In this conversation about unity. Don't forget about grace. Don't be mad when someone seems to get more than you do. Some might NEED more than you do.

Don't be the older son we talked about last week in the story of the prodigal. Remember? He was mad that the Father had a party for the younger son who had gone away and spent all his inheritance.

The point was there was rejoicing when he came home.

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

SERVICE IS **THE ROAD TO UNITY.**

Each passage in the NT that talks about spiritual gifts, mentions them in the context of unity.

Romans 12:4-6

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Paul equates the church to a body. Each body has many different parts, but still functions as one body. So too should the church. Many parts, one body. Different gifts, one church.

Paul uses that word 'grace' again.

When it comes to gifts, we need to see them as God's grace given to us. For what purpose?

To build up the church. To serve others.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Again, the context is unity in the church. If we all use our God given gifts to serve others, it tends to promote unity.

THANKSGIVING MEAL

STAR TREE

SERVING TEAMS (membership class today)

John 13:1-5

¹It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so

he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Why did Jesus wash the disciples feet? To serve them? Yes. But also to unify them. You see serving someone else tends to unify. Later that night Jesus prayed that prayer for Unity.

INVITATION:

God is ONE. He wants us to work together as one. One heart. One mind. One purpose.

John 17:20-21

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one,

Small Group Questions

1. Why is it that the church (people) cannot get along?
2. If unity starts with the heart, what does that mean for you?
3. Why do we allow our hearts to be hardened?
4. If unity can come through being on the same page as God, how can we accomplish this?
5. Read Ephesians 4: - what does this passage tell about the bod of Christ?
6. Discuss the idea, "service is the road to unity".
7. What is your gift? What are you passionate about that you can do in the community/ church to bring about unity?