Sermon Series: Being An Authentic Church
To be used with Session: Serving in Christ
Sermon Title Possibilities: Beyond Imperfections, Listening Love
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

Connection with Unit Theme: To compliment the Bible study, "Being an Authentic Church," this sermon unveils the themes of unity, empathy, and service in Ephesians 4. The goal of this sermon is to reinforce the context of the church at Ephesus, while making it relevant to today's culture, challenging believers to active listening and empathy as a course to authenticity.

Introduction: Did you know that mirrors are imperfect reflections? Not only are they made by humans, who are imperfect, but they never give you an accurate reflection of what you look like. This is like trying to live your life as a reflection of another person! It is always going to be imperfect and lead to an inaccurate inauthentic life. As we become an authentic church, I challenge us today to reflect Jesus. While we may not always get it right, we know the source is right. In Ephesians 4, Paul challenges our collective identity to mirror the character of Jesus in our church.

1. **Unity (v.1-7).**
    Paul emphasizes the vital need for unity among believers, urging us to preserve it through the bond of peace. This unity is paramount because collective efforts achieve far more than individual endeavors. Think of it like a sports team working together for a common goal – each member contributing unique skills. Similarly, as the body of Christ, our diverse gifts unite towards spreading the Gospel. Paul, writing from a Roman prison, underscores that our service is a collective expression of a shared calling. Let's intertwine in love, humility, and patience, creating a unified front mirroring our Savior's character.

2. **Empathy (v.11-13).**
    In Ephesians 4:13, Paul encourages the pursuit of spiritual unity and depth of insight, emphasizing the importance of practicing empathy and compassion towards one another. By demonstrating understanding and kindness, we tangibly manifest the love of Christ. This transcends the necessity for constant agreement and chooses to unite in love, despite differences. This practice of empathy allows us to extend beyond our own perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of the needs of those around us. This is like the experience of someone genuinely listening without interruption or judgment. Imagine if our churches did that! We would be a powerful source of mutual support and care.

3. **Service (vs 14-16).**

A powerful way to minister to one another is through acts of service. Whether it's cooking for a struggling family, volunteering at a local food bank, or offering a listening ear. Serving demonstrates Christ's love in a tangible way, and the beauty is, opportunities abound within and outside our churches. Let's unleash creativity to find regular ways to serve one another. Think of it as a relay race, where each person passes on the baton of love and compassion, creating a chain reaction of kindness that touches many lives. Service, central to our Christian journey, is more than a task, it's a collective outpouring of love, with each unique contribution vital for the growth and maturity of the body.

Conclusion:

Paul, writing from a Roman prison, underscores the vital need for unity. He reminds us that our collective efforts, like a sports team working towards a common goal, achieve far more than individually. Through the pursuit of spiritual unity, we can practice empathy and compassion, fostering a deeper understanding of our needs. Imagine the transformation we'd see if our churches became a place where genuine listening and mutual support flourished. Let us, therefore, embrace unity, empathy, and service as the living expression of our shared calling, creating a unified front that mirrors our Jesus's character and profoundly impacts the world around us.

Author Bio

Dr. Justin R. Lester is the Pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Vallejo, California. He is the Author of, "Necessary Endings" and other works to enrich the local Church.