

Ephesians 4:2-6

Introduction

- I. Theme: Pursuing Unity with One Another
- II. Analogy: We are like an orchestra learning to play together
- III. The kind of people that pursue unity are the people who have the heart, head, and hands of Christ

The Passage

- I. Having the “heart” of Christ (v. 2)
 - A. Humility (lit: “lowliness of mind”)
 - 1. a basic assessment of ourselves: I’m not the most important person in the room
Romans 12:3: Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought
 - 2. a basic assessment of our interests/desires: my interests aren’t most important
Phil 2:3-4: Don’t look just to your own interests but to others’ interests
Jesus is our example
 - B. Gentleness/meekness
 - 1. = strength under control
Refers to the taming/training of animals
 - 2. Jesus is example (Mt 11:29)
 - C. Patience (lit: “long-tempered”)
 - 1. The opposite of being short tempered
= long-suffering, willing to bear a lot before getting angry
 - 2. Connects with next phrase: “Bearing with one another in love”
In real community full of broken people, there’s a lot of simple “putting up” with each other that needs to happen.
 - D. Rule of thumb: don’t live in community the way you drive in community
- II. Having the “head” (mindset/perspective) of Christ (v. 4-6)
 - 1. The mindset is this: we already have unity in Christ. We are already one.
 - a. We didn’t create the unity, it’s created by what the one God has done for us in sending his Son and his Spirit
 - b. See 2:14-18
Christ is our peace. He creates peace, not us
We are simply called to “keep” the peace we already have in Christ
 - 2. Seven “ones” (seven is a number of perfection and completeness)
 - 1) What unites us is far more significant than what divides us
 - 2) We need to view each other less in light of what we do to each other and more in light of what God has done for both of us.
 - 3) These are important to remember in the midst of conflict with other believers
 - a. one body (Jew and Gentile now “one new man” in Christ)
when I’m tempted to gossip, I need to remember that this person and I belong to each other—members of same body
 - b. one Spirit

when another believer seems weird or unrelatable, important to remember that the same Spirit is working in them as in me

c. one hope

when there's no reconciliation with another believer, important to remember that we have the same future hope (eternal life) and one day we will be reconciled (so might as well reconcile now)

d. one Lord = Jesus Christ

when intimated by another believer, important to remember that we both report to the same boss/Lord.

e. one faith

when having a hard time forgiving another believer, important to remember that we have one faith—we've both put our trust in Christ's death on cross as our source of forgiveness (how can I not forgiven someone whom God has forgiven?)

f. one baptism

this probably refers to the spiritual reality that baptism represents = union with Christ. We all died to an old life lived for the self and have been raised to a new life lived for Christ

g. one God and Father

We have one Father, so we are siblings/family

3) The "bond" of peace (v. 3)

same root word as v. 1: "prisoner" in chains

We're bound together/chained by this common salvation

III. Having the "hands" of Christ (v. 3)

"Make every effort to keep the unity we have in Christ"

A. Acknowledge extreme cases when we aren't called to pursue unity

1. When gospel message is being fundamentally compromised by someone in ways harmful to community (e.g. false teachers)
2. When the gospel lifestyle is being fundamentally compromised by someone in ways harmful to community (e.g. 1 Cor 5)

B. But generally, we should "make every effort" to maintain the unity

1. Peace is something we have to fight for
2. When in conflict with another believer ask yourself: Have I made every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? Have I done everything I can do?
3. Typical mistakes in conflict
 - a. we avoid conflict and not address the issue
 - b. we deal with conflict but without humility, gentleness, and patience
4. God's desire in conflict
= truthing in love (4:15)

Conclusion

I. Unity was Jesus' main prayer for us (John 17:20-23)

II. Let's pursue it together

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Of the three heart postures Paul mentions (humility, gentleness, and patience) which one comes easiest for you and which one do you struggle most with?
3. Referring to v. 4-6, the statement was made on Sunday that part of pursuing unity involves realizing that we already have unity through what God has done for us. It was suggested that we need to view other believers less in light of the harmful things they do to us and more in light of what God has done for both of us. Looking at some of the examples given in the outline (the seven “ones”) which of those resonates with you at this time? Which do you need to be reminded of at this time?
4. Can you think of a time when you had to make every effort to maintain unity (when you had to “fight for peace”) in a way that led to full reconciliation? What were the challenges you faced (internally or externally) and what were some of the lessons learned from that experience?
5. Can you think of a time when reconciliation was not accomplished? What were some of the lessons learned from that experience?
6. In what ways do the principles of this passage apply to our relationships with non-Christians? In what ways do they not apply?