

THE CHURCH
Part 2
“Living in Community”
Eph 4:1-6

Christ is the Lord of all. That includes the church, His body. It is a glorious thing. But it is composed of saved sinners. People being perfected but sinners still. We are such contrary and selfish beings. Ministry at times is akin to herding cats. And I am one of them! Yet God is glorified to work in and through us. Look at Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 3:17-18 - God is transforming us. Believers are not perfect, but we are being perfected.

1. We have received grace and mercy from God through the Lord Jesus, and we are called to extend that to those with whom we share a common inheritance in Jesus. How does this work?

a. In Lke 17:1-10 the Lord speaks to the importance of extending grace and mercy to others.

- Things that cause us to stumble (In this context, these things are other people) will come. But woe to the one through whom they come. They'd be better off drowned?! Mtt 5:21-26
- * The “stumbling block” given in this teaching is an offended believer harboring an unforgiving spirit.
- * “Ouch,” right? Who of us has never harbored resentment toward another person at one time or another?
- If one offends and repents, we are called to forgive and seek restored fellowship (if it has been severed). Even if it gets hard. We are called to forgive.

b. In Eph 4:1-2 believers are called to “bear with one another in love.” “Bear with” (“put up with, endure, tolerate” etc. one another). **In Love. Look up 1 Jhn 3:14-22; Eph 5:21 See also Lev 19:17-18.**

- How willing are you and I to endure that one person who grates on our nerves like fingernails on a chalkboard?
- Yet the command stands: See Php 4:1-3.

2. Lets unpack Eph 4:1-6 - Paul, “as a prisoner for (“on account of, for the sake of”) the Lord,” urged believers to live a life worthy of the calling they had received (*Lit: “to which you have been called”*). Called by God through the gospel. Called by God to live out the implications of that message. It *isn't* theoretical. (Php 1:27; 1 Pet 2:9-12)

a. We are called to be:

- Completely (“with all”) humility and gentleness (See Rom 12:3, Php 2:1-4).
- Patient, (“long suffering, slow to retaliate/avenge.”) Bearing with one another in love. See Exd 34:6-7 - we should seek to imitate our Lord. (Jhn 15:13 / 1 Jhn 3:16)

b. We are called to make every effort to keep (“maintain, guard, watch over”) the unity of the Spirit through the bond (“ligament,” i.e., connection) of peace.

c. Why? There is one body (*the church*) and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope (“expectation, confidence”) when you were called.

- One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (Mtt 28:16-20)
- One God and Father of all who is over all, through all and in all.
- Do not forsake the body of Christ.

God has called us to live life together. We are imperfect creatures undergoing a transformative life. God is perfecting us. We won't realize that perfection, that "Christlikeness" until we are in the next, eternal portion of life. Here and now we are called to rejoice in the love, grace and mercy of God. AND - to work at showing that love, grace and mercy to others.

1. Keep short accounts with God.
2. Keep short accounts with others. Do not "kick the can" down the road. Resentment earns "interest." Php 4:8 comes to mind. What is dominating your thinking?
3. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Col 3:13
4. Be patient with others. They have to be patient with us.