

Pastor Dave Patterson
Ephesians Part 5—Guard the Unity!
2.21.2021

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

We have provided all the Scriptures references in the sermon and some discussion questions for you to use to discuss the weekend message.

This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. Give priority to the needs and pace of your group members.

While the questions are important, remember your group's goal is to create an atmosphere that will foster true friendships. Use the discussion questions as you see fit but emphasize the relationships.

[Ephesians 4:1-7]

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace (gifting and ability) has been given as Christ apportioned it.

Unity is the place where God commands the blessing.

[Ephesians 4:1]

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received...” (“to have an equivalent action to your position”)

Balance out your information with your application.

When our doctrine and information outweigh our practice and application, we fall into deception.

[James 1:22]

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

[Ephesians 4:3, AMP]

Make every effort (exert yourself) to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, (be diligent to guard the unity of the Spirit) binding yourselves together with peace [each individual working together to make the whole successful].

Everything that God does, He does in relationship.

[Luke 11:17]

“Every kingdom divided against itself is doomed to destruction; and a house divided against itself falls”

God never works through a divided Kingdom. God never separates what He builds.

[John 17:20-23]

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect (mature, complete) unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

Unity is the way that people will know that the Father sent Jesus to earth. Unity is Christ's invitation for people far from Him to know the way He loves them by watching the way we love one each other.

How to Guard the Unity—

1. Identify and eliminate a “critical spirit”

Criticism = is the practice of judging the merits and faults of something or someone / the expression of disapproval based on perceived faults or mistakes

Critical Spirit = A negative attitude of the heart that seeks to tear down, condemn, and destroy with words

There's a difference between a critical spirit and discernment: don't be a fool operating in the gift of suspicion with a large side of gossip.

[Matthew 7:1-3, TPT]

“Refuse to be a critic full of bias toward others, and judgment will not be passed on you. For you'll be judged by the same standard that you've used to judge others. The measurement you use on them will be used on you. Why would you focus on the flaw in someone else's life and yet fail to notice the glaring flaws of your own?”

I'm the most critical when I'm the least prayerful.

Your conversation will most resemble the one you listen to the most.

[Ephesians 4:29]

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

2. Refuse to Carry and offense

Getting offended is an event; carrying an offense can last for months or years and derail your life. We can make a choice not to carry that!

[Proverbs 18:19, NLT]

“An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city”

[Proverbs 19:11]

A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.

To overlook an offense, look so high that you see Jesus’ love and sacrifice for the people who have hurt you.

[Ephesians 4:2]

“Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”

3. Discover your gifts and serve others.

Unity is a byproduct of serving one another with love. When I serve someone else, I heal division in the Body.

[1 Corinthians 12: 7, 25, 27]

“...A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other”
...God has put the body together, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other...Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

[Ephesians 4:12-16]

Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

You have a part to play in the maturity of the House and in the revealing of the Body of Christ to the world at large.

FOR MONDAY—

1. Take inventory of any offense you might be carrying and submit it to the Lord. When possible, take a practical step to release forgiveness.
2. Ask the Lord in prayer for more patience and perspective to unify.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. What are some significant things that you intentionally guard in your everyday life? How have they become priorities for you?
2. In Paul's writings, there are often tangible shifts from theology to practicality. How do you see that in Ephesians 4, regarding your calling?
3. How does unity position us for God's blessing? [Psalm 133] Why does God build with people that are unified?
4. In the Bible, what has God put together, and what safeguards has He put in the Church to keep these things from being separated?
5. Why is it important to recognize the "event" of offense and overlook carrying the offense in the ongoing? [Proverbs 18.19, 19.11]
6. What is the difference between a critical spirit and discernment? What does Matthew 7 remind us to keep these in check?
7. How comfortable are you being around people with a critical spirit or carrying that yourself? How does this apply for you being around people who cloak criticism of God's Church?
8. Where can you personally champion unity, and what ripple effects do you think that might have in your communities?
9. Do you know what your own special work is, and are you using it? How does your active gift contribute to the maturity of the House?