

Unity: In Christ, Through Diverse Ministry

Pastor Paul Springer | Ephesians 4:1-16
March 4, 2018 | Winter Cycle: Week 8 of 10

Personal Connection (25 minutes)

Icebreaker

Think back to your childhood when you received a gift. Do you remember ever comparing your gift to another's gift?

Praying for each other and Sharing Christ

How has your week been going? What can your brothers and sisters in Christ lift up in prayer for you?

As you grow deeper knowing Christ's love, how does that either encourage or challenge you to share Christ?

Review Last Sunday's *What Now?*

Christ longs for a close relationship with you, one where he can lavish on you an abundance of his love! Be honest with the Lord and with yourself if this is difficult for you to accept.

Digging Deeper (30 minutes)

This Week's Key Concept:

Working together, the church can express the fullness of Christ.

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Re-read Ephesians 4:1-3, noting the way the Apostle Paul urges Christians to walk with Christ. Discuss.

Q. Which of these do you wrestle with most? Have you ever prayed for Christ to help you make these a consistent part of your life?

Q. We are bonded together because of our love for Christ and his love for us, but how do we stay unified and keep the peace among each other?

Re-read Ephesians 4:4-6. How does the Apostle Paul describe the common ground shared by all Christians?

Q. There is one body, but unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. How can we, as one body, focus on what we have in common?

Q. Often, differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church. Have you learned to appreciate people who are different from you?

Optional Deep Dive - Re-read verse 6. God is *transcendent* — that is, far above and independent of his creation. He is also *immanent* — very much involved in his creation. He is over all, in all, and through all! What a mighty God we serve! Feel free to share your thoughts on this profound truth.

Re-read Ephesians 4:7-10. After discussing what we all share, the Apostle Paul discusses our differences. Describe in your own words.

Q. How do differing gifts and viewpoints help the church as it does God's work?

Q. What are some of your God-given abilities? How can you use them?

Note: Each believer has God-given abilities that can strengthen the whole body. Your special ability may seem small or large, but it is yours to use in God's service. And remember, oneness in Christ does not destroy individuality!

Re-read Ephesians 4:11-16. How does the Apostle Paul describe the role of church leaders?

Q. In what area of your life, do you feel like a leader?

Note: Even if you don't consider yourself a leader, hold a title as a leader, or have the spiritual gift of leadership, someone is watching you for guidance. It could be your children, grandchildren, the children in your neighborhood, coworkers, family, friends, classmates, etc. — your role may not be an official one, but God can use you in your relationships to lead others to Christ!

Impact Questions

Q. When sharing Christ with others, some are fairly good at speaking the truth but forget to be loving. Some are good at expressing love but lack the courage to speak a hard word if the truth is painful. How do you relate to these two concepts?

*Note: If you have a hard time expressing both truth and love simultaneously when sharing Christ, you are not alone. Ephesians 4:15 says we are to do both but to take heart. It is only **through** Christ that we can accomplish this. He makes a way.*

Q. Do you think people can see Christ in you? How well are you representing him?

Some Christians fear that any mistake will destroy their witness for the Lord. They see their own weaknesses and compare themselves to others, believing everyone else is stronger than they are. How can we get out of this comparison crisis? The answer is for all of us to look to Jesus. Christ forms us into a body — into a group of individuals who are united in purpose and love for one another and the Lord. If an individual stumbles, Christ, through the rest of the group, is there to pick that person up and help him or her walk with God again.

What now? (15 minutes)

We shouldn't move ahead of God's timing, but God has called us to be his witness and share the truth about him with others. Ask the Lord for the next steps in your life; whether it be confidence to be bold in your witness, slowing down your schedule so you can have more quiet time with him, or how to better show your love to those you don't understand. Either way, God knows the reason why you are pausing. Seek him for his guidance and trust him for the results!

Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Please share your prayer requests and praises, so that your LIFE Group may lift you up in prayer. Pray purposefully that the Lord would transform your heart and those around you — to fully know his love, and, that as believers, we would all be unified as one body through Christ, despite the differences he intended for us to have.