

Scripture Text

Ephesians 4:1-6

Context

Unity is a key theme in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. God's plan, which he set forth in Christ, is to "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth". The unity of God's people, the church, is a central part of this plan. God has united peoples from every language, tribe and nation through the gospel. In this passage, Paul begins to practically apply this truth to Christians in the local church.

Observation and Meaning

- What is Paul's main exhortation to Christians in vv. 1-3? What does v. 1 tell us about the grounds for his exhortation?
- What character qualities are necessary in order to foster unity in the church (vv. 2-3)? Explain what these qualities mean.
- How do the different Persons of the Trinity relate to the life and unity of believers (vv. 4-6)?

Big Idea

God has saved us through his Son and united us as the one people of God. Therefore we are called to live in unity with one another because of who we are in Christ and because of who God is.

Connecting to the whole Bible's Story line

God is creating a new humanity, a people to be his treasured possession, through his Son. The church is to reflect the image of Christ and to live under his sovereign lordship.

Sermon Outline

- Be united because of who we are in Christ (4:1-3)
- Be united because of who God is (4:4-6)

Application

- What is the basis of our unity with one another? How central is the gospel to our relationships with other believers in the church?
- What would it look like to practice humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love in the context of our relationships with one another in the church?
- How can we cultivate these qualities? How do the truths of the gospel encourage us to grow in these qualities?
- How can we grow in our gospel unity as a church?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger story line of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (e.g. "for", "it", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.