SESSION 7

WALKING TOGETHER

EPHESIANS 4:1-10

1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. 7 Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 For it says: When he ascended on high, he took the captives captive; he gave gifts to people. 9 But what does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? 10 The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Paul communicated his honor, not shame.
B “Live and act in a way worthy of those who have been chosen” (TLB). Paul urged us to live our lives in accordance with our kingdom citizenship (Phil. 3:20).
C They have responded to the gospel call by faith and are now in Christ (Rom. 8:28-30).
D A fundamental Christian virtue, Jesus called us to be humble (Matt. 18:4). James promised that God “gives grace to the humble” (Jas. 4:6). Micah reminded us that God desires we “walk humbly” with God (Mic. 6:8). Jesus was the perfect embodiment of humility (Phil. 2:7-8).
E Christ perfectly exercised a mild spirit and self-control at His crucifixion (Isa. 53:7; 1 Pet. 2:23).
F “Eager to maintain” (ESV); “diligent” (NASB)
G Christians are able to live at peace with one another because Christ “is our peace” and “tore down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14).
H The church is to be of one accord, not divided or divisive. Jesus prayed for this in John 17.
I Each Christian has been given gifts to use for God’s glory and the building up of the church. God expects faithfulness with our gifts (Matt. 25:14-30).
J A quote of Psalm 68:18, “You ascended to the heights ... so that the LORD God might dwell there.”
K “The same one who came down is the one who went back up” (TLB)—Christ’s incarnation.
L Christ provides churches in all places with what they need for their ministries.
1. WALKING WORTHY (Eph. 4:1-3)
   - Paul called on his readers to demonstrate Christian attitudes and character.
   - Explain that Christian living takes place after conversion and is a result of salvation, not a means for gaining salvation.

2. LIVING UNIFIED (Eph. 4:4-6)
   - Paul explained that since every believer shares in the same hope found in Jesus, they should live in unity.
   - The relationship within the Trinity is the standard for how believers are to relate to each other.
   - Highlight how the Trinity is involved in the seven actions Paul identified.

3. ENJOYING VICTORY (Eph. 4:7-10)
   - Paul used an illustration from a military victory parade to introduce the idea of believers receiving gifts.
   - He summarized Psalm 68 as well, reminding his readers of a victory parade to Mount Zion.
   - Jesus is the conquering King who distributes gifts to His followers.
   - Focus on the ascent of Jesus as opposed to the descent. Interpret Jesus’ descent in terms of His incarnation.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers demonstrate the truth of the gospel by being unified in their actions.
- Believers are expected to demonstrate godly attitudes and character.
- Believers demonstrate their faith by living in unity with each other.
- Believers should live in celebration of the victory Jesus won for us.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What are benefits of exercising with other people?
• Although physical fitness is a personal responsibility and some people prefer to exercise alone, studies have revealed there are benefits to exercising with a group.
• Exercising with others provides motivation and accountability, and increases commitment and duration.
• As Paul transitioned from doctrine to application in his letter, he urged believers to exercise their personal faith in Christ by walking together.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 4:1-3

Why does walking worthy require walking together?
• All the qualities Paul listed are relational words. There’s no need for them in isolation.
• An accurate self-concept and controlling our strength means we don’t push to defend our rights or advance our agenda.
• Disagreements in God’s family are inevitable. Living in community requires a long fuse and bearing with others’ quirks and shortcomings.
• When these Christlike qualities characterize believers’ behavior, the result is God-glorifying unity.

How can we develop and display these qualities of a worthy walk?
• We don’t earn salvation by displaying these qualities. These attitudes in our lives demonstrate conversion has occurred and transformation is ongoing.
• None of these come naturally. We must determine to develop and display them through the power of the Spirit.
• Jesus has already created spiritual unity; our responsibility is to maintain it.
• We cannot be passive about preserving peace. It requires diligent, consistent effort.

EPHESIANS 4:4-6

Why is it so important that God’s people live in unity?
• Our end goal is to glorify God, to shine the spotlight on who He is in all His greatness. Unity among believers reveals the unity of the Triune-God.
• The church is one body—taught, empowered, guided, and held together by one indwelling Spirit.
• One Lord is the object of our faith. We were all baptized in Jesus’ name and expectantly hope for His return.
• There’s one Christian family because there’s one God the Father.
• When Christians are divided, the world doubts the reality of the gospel. Walking together in loving unity is how believers express the authenticity of God’s revealed mystery of the gospel.

EPHESIANS 4:7-10

How can believers live unified when we are so diverse?
• By God’s grace we’ve been saved, and by God’s grace we walk together in unity.
• Every believer has been given a portion of God’s multifaceted grace to build up the church and help others mature in their faith.
• Our unity is enhanced, not watered-down, by our diversity.
• We are united in our celebration of Christ’s victory. Paul drew on Psalm 68 to describe a military victory parade. As the king marched into the city with prisoners of war behind him he dispensed gifts to his cheering people.
• Jesus victoriously ascended into heaven because He voluntarily descended to earth to die for us.

How can we celebrate Christ’s victory while living in a world where victory is so elusive?
• We enjoy Christ’s victory when we walk worthy of our calling by walking in unity with other believers. When we exercise our faith together, supporting and celebrating one another’s spiritual victories, we enjoy Christ’s ultimate victory.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How can believers walk worthy of their calling?
• The call to follow Christ is a call to walk together with other believers in loving relationships. Our attitudes and actions should reflect the excellency of that calling.
• We can walk together because we have so many fundamentals in common—the same Lord, Spirit, and Father.
• Focus on what we have in Christ (all the spiritual blessings Paul enumerated) rather than what irritates or angers us in other Christians.
• Personal Challenge: If the unity and peace of our church were dependent upon your attitudes and behavior, how much unity and peace would we have? What steps will you take this week to walk together in unity with Christ’s body?
A RACING BIB OR PHOTO OF A RACE

Ask adults if they’ve ever participated in a 5K, and if so, to identify the race. There are many “fun runs” these days. Ask: Why do you think these races are so popular? Part of their popularity is due to an interest in physical fitness, but also because people enjoy walking or running together with diverse people. Most 5Ks have a distinctiveness that sets them apart, whether that be raising money for a charity or participants getting messy or dressing up in costumes.

Highlight that in Ephesians 4 Paul described a Christian race that we could name the Worthy Walk. This Worthy Walk isn’t just a fun hobby we participate in on the weekends; it should be a consuming passion that encompasses all of our existence. And it’s not a sprint to a finish line, but a lifelong journey. Ask: What is distinctive of the Worthy Walk? A worthy walk focuses on putting other people first, overcoming obstacles of disagreements, and walking together with others rather than running ahead in personal strengths and preferences. A worthy walker stops and serves along the way.

Display the number one. Note many race participants wear a running bib with an identification number. Ask: Why should all believers participating in the Worthy Walk wear the number one? We’re not proudly declaring we are number one, but that we’re striving to be like the One. Our unity reflects the unity of the Trinity, who sponsors, empowers, and runs this race before us. Note that most 5Ks have a closing ceremony where diverse people unite in celebration. Ask: What kind of celebration unites believers on this Worthy Walk?

THE ESSENCE OF TRUE HUMILITY

A key part of what Paul meant by walking in Christ is that we’re to live by certain virtues that reflect our new lives in Christ. One of these virtues that Paul called us to live by in Ephesians 4:2 is “all humility.”

In both the Old and New Testaments, God’s people are called to be humble (Ps. 25:9; Prov. 3:34; Isa. 66:2; Matt. 18:4; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:6). Similarly, God warns His people against the opposite attitude, the sin of pride (Prov. 8:13; Mark 7:22; 1 Pet. 5:5). What exactly is humility, and why is it important that we pursue humility?

Humility is defined as “a personal quality in which an individual shows dependence on God and respect for other persons.”

Throughout the Bible God reveals how dependent upon Him we are, from our very existence to our daily provisions. This reality leads us to a position of humility when it comes to our relationship with God. And, as our definition shows, humility also extends to how we treat others, which Jesus made clear in Luke 14:7-11.

Why is it important to pursue humility? Because Christ is the perfect example of humility—in His life and in the cross. As Christians, we pursue these Christlike virtues because we’re to imitate Christ in our own lives: “Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

C. S. Lewis summed up well the attitude of someone who is living humbly: “He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.” Instead, our focus is on loving God and loving others, not on making ourselves important.

Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you:

to act justly,
to love faithfulness,
and to walk humbly with your God (Mic. 6:8).

DIG DEEPER


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