

7-31-22 Sermon #29

A teacher gave her kids a math problem. She said there are 26 kids at the beach then 37 more come. How many kids are at the beach. One student's response was "too many for COVID-19".

Today's message kind of reminds me of when I was coaching recreational basketball. In all rec sports, all the players are required to play during every game. In basketball, every player has to play at least 2 of the 4 quarters. As their coach, I wanted my teams to understand that every player on the team needed to know how to play different positions and take on different roles. This can be challenging because a player may be playing for the first time and the other players' instincts are to avoid passing the ball to those with weaker skills. I needed to figure out how to make them Unified and I needed them to be willing to help teach, encourage and share the ball with each other. Like any team sport, being able to depend on each other is critical and when a team becomes divided, mistakes can have a snow ball effect. Then, nobody finds enjoyment from the game.

I emphasized to them that we could only become as good as our weakest player and they must catch each other doing things right. It's real easy to tear each other down. It's much more enjoyable when we have the attitude of building each other up.

I've always used prayer in my life and through prayer, I came up with a strategy that we used at the end of all practices and all games. It's called – the praise game or "I caught you doing something right". I made up a few basic rules; Nobody could be picked twice and whoever received praise, picked next. This made so nobody would know who they were going to be able to pick. Not only did it make them work hard at seeing each other succeed, it made them try harder so they would get to hear praises for what they did. They learned to become friends and for me, this was the biggest blessing.

Compliments are strange. It's hard for us to give them and it's hard to receive them. Our society works hard at tearing each other down and when we do praise others it can seem awkward and can be viewed as just flattery.

When I implemented the praise game, the team didn't do well at first. The kids had a tough time with finding something good about the other players. They tried to pick kids based on popularity but as time went on, it changed and really caught on. They said things to each other that actually meant something.

I was taught in business, "teams" who make the fewest mistakes and stay the healthiest are usually the ones who win the most. This concept is pretty much in everything. Sports, Family, Churches and even our individual spiritual walks. In the church, we need see each other using the gifts God gave us and then tell each other that we noticed. Not in flattery but in genuineness. As Christians, we need this kind of encouragement and it will help us to use our gifts more.

Another lesson that I learned was during the time that I was involved with CR program. The most important thing we needed to understand is that everyone is trying to deal with some kind of hurt, habit or hang-up. During a leadership conference in California, I was taught; the only way for people to succeed at

removing negative pain is through Christ. Using prayer and having a safe environment to verbalize what we're feeling is critical. Nobody was allowed to fix anyone and nobody was allowed to cross talk. We all needed to make a commitment to use prayer for each other and allow God to do what only God can do. We also used the bible to find ways to replace these pains with Godly things. Knowing scriptures isn't enough. We must be willing to "practice" applying them. This too, requires a lot of prayer but most important, friendships.

We need to trust Christ in order to change our lives.

Last week we looked at the first 3 chapters of Ephesians. The way Paul writes about the hope of salvation to the Gentiles is so beautiful. He's reassuring them that it's by God's grace that their invited into a new family. Through Jesus the Tora has been fulfilled and the barrier between them has been removed. He's telling Gentiles that they are a new Unified humanity who can live in peace with God's people. Paul ends chapter 3 by saying another prayer.

He prays that Jesus' followers would be strengthened by God's Spirit to simply grasp and comprehend the love that Christ has for His people. God has always desired a huge family of believers and He desires that we be Unified. Through Christ, He brought them the Unity of peace.

Paul needs to teach them what it means to have Christ as the HEAD of the church. This teaching needs to reveal how it should effect how they live. We all need to experience the power of the gospel when it's strengthened by the Spirit. In the last 3 chapters, Paul starts by shifting gears. He challenges the reader to respond to the gospel by how they live their own story. He starts with the everyday life of the church. It's a very big family with lots of different ethnic groups. He emphasizes that a Christian life is unified by one Lord, one Spirit with one Faith, one Baptism and to believe in one God.

During my preparation for this message I came across a really neat way of understanding the meaning of Unity. Unity doesn't = uniformity.

God's family consists of lots of different people but all are empowered by the same Spirit. **4:11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.** Each person is to use unique talents and have a passion to "serve" out of Love for each other. Nobody is the same in God's eyes. Everyone has different gifts and everyone has different roles in the family/church. We are all "new people" and a "new humanity" with Jesus as the "head". Paul uses this metaphor over the next few chapters and challenges us to take off our old humanity and put on a new humanity that shows the image of God is being restored. We need to become the light for all to see. Paul goes on to compare how the old is changed to new.

The old self needs to take off Lies and put on Truth.

Old self needs to take off Anger and replace it with Peace.

Instead of theft show generosity.

Instead of gossip we must use our words to encourage.

Instead of revenge we must offer forgiveness.

Replace promiscuity with exercising self-control

Instead of drunkenness we need to use God's spirit.

We all struggle with these character defects. Paul spells out what it looks like to be new and I think it's interesting that the first thing Paul thinks of for how the Spirit works in the lives of people is through singing and music. **5:19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

1st Sing together, 2nd singing alone, the 3rd sign of the Spirit is to be thankful for everything and the 4th sign of the Spirit compels Jesus' believers to elevate others as more important than themselves.

Paul also expands by showing how it works in Christian marriages. A man should have a wife who follows Jesus by respecting her husband and allowing him to be responsible for her. Husbands are to love his wife and to use his responsibility to lay down his selfish agenda and to prioritize his wife's well-being above his own. This kind of marriage re-enacts the gospel. The reason for this is because the Husbands actions mimic Jesus and His love and self-sacrifice. The wife's actions mimic the church which allows Jesus to love her and to make her new. Paul then applies the same idea to children, parents as well as slaves and masters. He ends the chapter by reminding them how Spiritual evils will try to undermine the Unity of Jesus' people and to compromise their new humanity. Paul challenges them to stand firm and put on the metaphorical set of body armor. All pieces of the metaphorical body armor are drawn from the book of Isaiah and how Isaiah depicted the messiah king. **11:5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. 49:2 ²He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. 59:17 ¹⁷He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.**

As believers, we need to make the messiahs attributes our own since we make up Jesus' body. Ephesians 6:14-18 translates Isaiah this way. **¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.**

It's about taking off the old and putting on the new. Truth, Righteousness, the gospel of peace, Faith, salvation, and the word of God. As Christians, we need to begin to form these habits. In the hallway by the kitchen is a picture of the armor of God. Whenever you walk by glance at it. We must continue to be proactive using prayer, scripture and relationships with each other to help us grow and mature as followers of Jesus. In Ephesians, Paul summarizes the whole gospel story and how it should reshape every part of our life story. I started the sermon by using an illustration about how valuable it is to build each other up. Try to practice seeing others do right and encourage each other with your words. Don't do it just to do it. That's just flattery. Praise someone because you mean it.

If you have a need in your life and need to openly speak to someone, I'm available and so are other leaders in the church. Don't quench it or keep it in for years. Free yourself from the bondage and allow Christ to give you healing. If you want to claim Jesus or re-claim Him in your life, that's available too. Let's pray:

It also reminded me of1 Corinthians 10;13 ¹³ No

temptation^[a] has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted^[a] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,^[a] he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

Verse 23 & 24 Paul reminds them about how to live a Christ filled life

²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

“Amen”

Paul is confronting them and us with a problem. When we accepted Christ we left these things and by going back into them we grieve the Spirit.

In verse 32 and chapter 5;1 & 2 Paul tries to give them a simple resolve. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **5;¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

This isn't our nature but it's the only way to be United with God's character.

Between chapter 4;17-32 and chapter 5;3–20 Paul convicts all of us with something.

Except Paul always gives us a way out

Having unity with the Holy Spirit requires changing our way of thinking.

Through Christ we become a new person.

It makes me think of the song, “GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS” I love how it says “We become new every morning”.

Singing is actually a way of Unifying with Christ.

It’s a sign of the spirit.

We sing together, we sing alone, singing is being thankful and singing elevates others.

In 1st Corinthians 10 :23 it tells us what Freedom should look like

²³ “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

From chapter 5 verse 21 through 6;9 Paul makes it even more personal.

Now he address wives, husbands, children, slaves and masters.

We all fit multiple roles and we need to only examine the areas that apply to us.

When we take responsibility of our roles and study how to be the best we can at them, Unity comes with blessing.

We must not get caught up in the lie that if they did that then I would be able to do this.

It's not about seeing what others roles are. It's about mastering our individual roles for making us Unified in Christ.

In Verse 21-33. It talks about wives and husbands. Wives are to respect husbands and husbands are to love their wives.

Once again, this is about Unity. Paul is using family relationships to illustrate how individual roles are important.

**The wife is used as an example of the church and the husband is used as an example of the head.
In all families their can be a break down of Unity and God wants us to know how to keep that.**

Earlier we seen that Christ came so that we could have the Unity of peace.

When we don't put others ahead of ourselves then we slowly pull away from Christ. Little by little we allow our selfish desires to creep back into our lives and before we know it, everything in our lives seem to be spiraling out of control.

The end of chapter 6 is about the armor of God.

Each piece of it represents all the ways that Paul is describing for us for a way out. Living life without the armor on is a recipe for disaster and when we claim Christ and live a life that doesn't have the sanctification process as part of it, we will never be able to stay unified with Christ.

Life will always bring changes and the world will forever bring hardships with it.

Our leaders aren't going to bring us salvation and they're not going to be able to bring us a relationship with God's people.

Becoming a prayerful church or a unified church is about staying in Christ.

s out of control and in marriage. Christ is the head of the church and when we don't respect Christ we don't reap the full measure of His love.

Christ always loves but how deep we feel it is dependant on how much we respect it.

Our ability to give love is dependent on how much

This is about the relationship between wives and husbands.

In order for any marriage to flourish, God’s design must be addressed.

We’re all loved equally by God but He designed us different.

In Genesis 2 after God made all the Earth and plants and living beings

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

Then in verse 18 ¹⁸The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Then in the end of verse 20, after Adam named all the animals and birds God said

But for Adam^[a] no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^[b] and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib^[b] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” ²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God created us to take on different roles. When these 2 roles only worry about what God desires for them to be, Then they become Unified.

God wants Unity and we need to claim responsibility of our own roles.

God's roles are different because it's only through 2 becoming 1 that a family can exist. We must have Unity for being able to allow our role as parents for our children to find Unity.

In Paul's letter he addresses wives first. ²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

In today's times, these verses are viewed as very chauvinistic and very degrading.

That's not what Paul is saying. It's not about that.

Matthew 7:7 says Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷ "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

This is talking to all of us. We must never think anything different.

I heard an interesting view point about verses 22-24 from the bible project video about Ephesians 6:22-24. because of God's design for Eve, women do need to feel loved more than men do.

It stated that how much respect a wife uses for her husband can be a sign of how much respect she has for Christ.

Feeling this ultimate type of love can only be achieved by the level of respect a wife gives to her husband.

Respect and love go hand in hand.

We all know that God's love is unconditional but we also know that God will not give us things when we don't first prove ourselves trustworthy.

In Luke 16:10 it says ¹³ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

God is telling wives to respect her husband and to submit to his authority.

The world is telling wives that that's crazy and it must be a mistake.

Paul also compares the wife to the church. When a church doesn't respect God, they're not putting Christ as the Head.

It kind of goes back to chapter 4:²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Verses 25 – 33 address men

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing^[b] her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In Genesis, God made man first and he made him responsible for the garden. Caring for or tending to it was

not about choice and Eve was a gift from God. This was so Adam wouldn't be alone.

This doesn't say "if she respects you". Christ never stopped giving Mercy, Grace and forgiveness. Christ continually cleanses us through His blood and will never do anything but give love. Because He loved is why he never retali.

Christ is head over the church and the church is always falling short. It's our responsibility to bring the word into the home and when we don't love the way Christ does, we create division.

In chapter 6 it's going to talk to Fathers about exasperating their children. This is not referring to wives but husbands.

Men can be overbearing and we need to see how Christ loved.

He loved unconditional and wives and husbands must find Unity in order to find joy in their marriages.²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—³⁰ for we are members of his body.

Verse 31 comes right out of Genesis³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

I do want to clarify one thing.

I don't want any of you to think I'm using the book of Ephesians as an illustration of our church.

I'm so thankful for all the faithful, loving people that are a part of this church.

This is talking about us as individuals. Our society is all about looking at others and knowing how they should be.

Christianity is about our individual relationship with Christ.

Christ death is a choice for us as individuals.

Examining ourselves and praying for a change of mind is how we develop a healthy family.

Mercy, grace and forgiveness must first come to us as individuals and then repentance.

Repentance isn't about what others need. It's about what I need to do to change my weaknesses.

Then I can contribute to growing the church through my testimony.

What Paul is describing is not for our ability to see others sin. It's for us to examine ourselves and take responsibility for how we can help the family.

about going to suffer.

When God made Adam and Eve, He made them different. That wasn't by accident.

What Paul is trying to communicate with the church is that we all have to achieve with his

When we look at these 7 areas of separation we should examine ourselves and see which one were weakest in.

Just like a basketball team. A healthy church family can only be Unified or fruitful based on how much we walk with each other.

Verse 8-10 is a great reminder for all of us. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

This is why praying in all things is so valuable.

a point that I think we need to see in our prayer lives also.

When

The only way to be in Unity is to look in the mirror and see what you need Christ to help you with.

traits in others. It's about trying to rid ourselves of them so the church and the family can flourish.

Having victory over our own shortcomings is how we can encourage others to not give up.

When Paul went to Ephesus he knew the Gentiles had been practicing these sins for a long time and unless Paul gives them something to replace it with, they have no chance.

teaches us that defects that counts. Can we make fewer starts talking about our character and our character defects. It's a lot easier if we say it was the people of Ephesus but the word is for the generations to come.

I don't know how anyone who reads these verses that can't see themselves somewhere in them.

I do want to say that if we only focus on the ugliness of who we are, then we may miss the point.

After each sin or every point, Paul also gives us the way out. This is how God desires the family of believers to become.

When we don't feel this from Christ, it's very hard to offer it to others.

When we participate in sin, which we all do, the Spirit (God living in us) it tries to remind us of how much we need Christ to continually forgives us.

In Ephesus, the gentiles had no hope and by believing in Christ, we are no longer separation from God.

roles to some and this is for us to be able to have unity in the church.

This can be found in verses 11 & 12.

Then Paul talks about maturing and how we need to grow. But his main point is that we come to understand that Christ is the head of the church and we represent the body.

The first three chapters are about Unity in the population but now he's starting to direct their thoughts for us to keep our individual lives in Unity with Christ.

In the last 3 chapters, Paul, reveals things that are more about how we can separate ourselves from the relationship we professed to Christ and he's requiring self-examination.

This is very challenging message for me because we all do things that are sin and I don't know anyone who wants to hear that.

If we understand how much Paul prayed, we can gain encouragement from that. It's been awesome to watch how much our church prays.

Please come next Wednesday for our Wednesday night prayer meeting at 7:00.

If we truly want to take a good relationship with God and make it better, we need to elevate our prayer lives.

Because the book of Ephesians speaks mainly to the Gentiles, it's good for us to be reminded of how we can find more joy in our walk with God.

No longer did the Gentile nation need to be without hope and like the Jews, life as they knew it changed.

The Gentiles led a life of separation and sin was no longer a way of life.

Once we do then Verses 15 & 16 happens.

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

It can also pierce our hearts because they convict us of our sinful nature.

These last 3 chapters can hurt because they reveal truths that we don't want to hear requires that we use the scripture for only us. We can't look at these scriptures to see how others need to be.

In the garden, Adam was designed to work the land and Eve was his help.

Eve was made for Adam so that he wouldn't be lonely. God wanted him to have companionship and for Adam to love her.

I'm not saying this in any way for us to think I'm being a chauvinist or a womanizer.

It's only for the purposes of verses 22 – 33. It's purely about having Unity.

My only desire is that we take a good relationship with God and to make it even better.

My desire is to increase our prayer lives and increase our ability to love better.