



CHURCH

IN - helping a sense of belonging...

A helpful icebreaker:

Paul wrote this letter to the church as a great encouragement to them - they would have read it with anticipation and expectation.

Recall a time when you received a letter (or email) which meant a lot to you.

UP - hearing from God and growing...

The letter to the Ephesians can be split into two parts, with the first three chapters giving some teaching on what the gospel is and the second three with some instruction about how to live it out. Chapter 4 marks the start of this second section and Paul begins by emphasising the importance of unity, and uses the image of the church being the body of Christ.

What most encourages you about the image of the church being a body?

In your experience what are some good examples of maintaining unity, even in the face of differing opinions? Can you think of some practical steps to maintain unity in our church so as to not take it for granted?

v7-12 starts with emphasising that to each one grace is given, and ends by showing that the purpose of this grace is 'to prepare God's people for works of service' for unity, faith knowledge and maturity. What possible 'works of service' can you identify to serve the Body of Christ (ie the church)?

What steps can you practically take to help others in their development as Christians, so that we all grow unto maturity? (v14-16)

OUT - impacting others...

This passage includes some very practical guidelines about unity and growth. Following on from your discussion choose just one practical step that you will choose to take to respond to this challenge this week.

Spend some time praying together, to draw on the resource of Gods grace as you choose to step into this.

LIFEgroup
Notes

BIBLE READING:

Ephesians 4:1-16 (NIV)

Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make 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 when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it[a] says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”[b]

9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 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 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 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.