

God's Care Expressed *Caring Toward Unity* Ephesians 4:1-6

Intro: Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, just hours before he was crucified, petitioned the Father on our behalf. He prayed for us, "that they may be one as we are one." Jesus prayed this "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21-22).

I fear that unity has never been as important to the church as it was to her Lord. We have consistently forfeited our unity too soon for reasons that should have been secondary to our unity. We have succeeded usually in partitioning the church more so than protecting her, in demonstrating a divisive spirit rather than expressing the unity of Christ in love.

The great apostle expresses his own love for believers as he pleads with them to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph. 4:1). In order that the heart of God may be properly expressed through his church, he charges them to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

I. ADJUST DAILY LIVING TO YOUR CALLING v1: *Live a life worthy of the calling you have received*

***Have you ever noticed how distinctive a walk is? You can tell a person sometimes just by the click of their heels or the swish of their clothing as they walk. The posture, the gait, the motion of the arms and legs—all these are distinctive to the walk of the individual. I picture the Father waiting for the Prodigal Son and identifying him when he is still far away by his walk.

Two people can have a hard time walking together. The one goes fast, the other slow. The one stops frequently, the other not at all. The one is purposeful and straight in his gait while the other meanders from side to side, more interested in the flowers and birds than the heart rate and pace.

A. Paul makes his appeal as a prisoner of Christ. In prison, everything is ordered by the bars, the limits, the security.

B. Paul is urging, begging, petitioning. He is passionate about this matter of Christian living.

C. You have choices about your lifestyle, your WALK, your worldview. Live your life in this particular way—faithful to your calling.

D. Your calling dictates your behavior.

E. "Worthy" is "congruous, appropriate, fitting." He is challenging us to live a life with INTEGRITY where our actions match our words, our walk matches our talk.

II. MAINTAIN THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT v2: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*

***Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to maintain a vehicle over time? Rebekah, my daughter, had her truck in the shop again last week. This time the battery cables melted on top of the battery in a spray of fireworks.

Maintenance is time consuming. That is why we often defer it. In fact, "deferred maintenance" is part of the assessment of any real property. To maintain something is to be continually examining it, anticipating what will go wrong, trying to fix things before they break.

A. Make every effort—it is going to take hours and days of effort, repeated effort, to keep the peace. It will be a life full of efforts toward unity. There is exertion in this word, diligence, and perseverance.

B. To maintain the unity of the Spirit. The Spirit lives in every believer. The Spirit permeates the church. The Spirit has a particular unity which he gives. It is not an intellectual unity but a Spiritual unity. It is not a forced unity, not uniformity or conformity.

C. The bond is that which binds something together. A bond is glue, rope, or tape. It keeps things together. This rope, glue or tape is peace. It is the bond of peace. Peace is the bond that keeps us together. Unity and peace are not the same thing. Peace keeps the unity. Unity does not keep the peace.

Peace is made up of two three things for the Christian:

1. Peace with God. This is our salvation that he has discussed at length. We are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. This dimension of peace is fundamental and is the bond which maintains unity.
2. Peace with fellow believers. This tranquility and harmony is to characterize our lives together. This, too, is bought for us through the blood of Christ. We must maintain unity with our fellow Christians because Christ purchased this unity when he died upon the cross, making the two men, Jew and Gentile, into one new man, thus achieving peace.
3. Peace with our environment. Peace is also contentment, joy in our circumstances, seeing beyond our hardships and difficulties through the hope we have in Christ. It is the absence of greed and lust and fear, and the presence of contentment in all situations.

III. REHEARSE THE SEVEN ONES: *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all* (Ephesians 4:4-6)

A. One Body—that is the church. We are many members but only one body. And that is the body of Christ, “the temple of his body” (John 2:21: But the temple he had spoken of was his body)

B. One Spirit—that is God’s Holy Spirit.

C. One Hope—our hope is only in Christ (1 Timothy 1:1: Christ Jesus our hope)

D. One Lord—that is Jesus

E. One faith—that is our faith in Christ. This is not a reference to a single faith statement or proposition. Instead, it is a reference to the action of trusting in Christ alone for our salvation. Our faith is singular. It is all in Christ. “Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:21).

F. One baptism—that is our baptism into the body of Christ. I think it refers to the baptism of the Spirit by which we are incorporated into the body of Christ but it could be water baptism as well. The practice of one baptism did stand in contrast to communities like Qumran who kept ceremonial pools where the faithful often were baptized.

G. One God and Father of all. Jesus taught us to call God “Father.” So this is added to a monotheistic formula that could have been Jewish or Muslim but is distinctively Christian with Father in it.

1. Who is over all-God as Sovereign Father
2. Through all-Jesus is our mediator, bringing us through the veil
3. IN all—this is the indwelling Spirit.