



Sermon Series: Circle Up
Sermon Title: To Serve Better
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-13
Speakers: Reid Robinette



**Before your group study begins, share your first impressions on the message.
Did the message raise any particular questions?**

*IF YOU WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND THE SUNDAY SERVICE, WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE SERMON AT
<http://www.crossroads140.com/sermons/>*



Summary: The challenge set before the church in the first century, and for us today, is to serve the world as the unified body of Christ fueled by grace.



Each week you will open the Bible and explore the Scripture for the week. While you're there, take a look at the verses that surround your text for the week. As you read, you might want to make a list of observations. Try to put yourself in each of the character's shoes. Make a list of questions you may not have answers to. Ask God what He may be trying to teach you.

My first impression of the passage:

Observations:

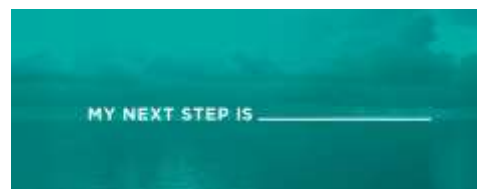
Scripture surrounding your text-

Characters (Who's listening? Who's in the story?) / Setting / Culture-

My Questions:



1. Why is it impossible to represent Jesus without unity in the body?
2. How does grace provide the power for serving in community?
3. Why are both unity and diversity necessary for a healthy body?



1. What steps can you take to minimize unresolved differences in your community?



Pray that your group would value and pursue the connection they have with God and each other.

Go Deeper

Further Study

Have a volunteer read EPHESIANS 4:1-6.

What does this passage have to say about the source of our Christian unity?

The sevenfold repetition of “one” in these verses is striking. The unity of the body of Christ reflects the unity and oneness that permeates the Godhead—God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Since God is One, that same unity should permeate the Christian community. But when we look at the church, unity isn’t always the first thing we notice.

What factors or issues hinder unity in the church? Which issues are legitimate barriers to Christian unity, and which are superficial or arbitrary?

Why is unity worth striving for in the church?

Practically speaking, how do we cultivate and nurture community among believers?

In the first three verses of this chapter, Paul stressed the importance of living a life worthy of our calling, which means bearing with each other in love and striving toward keeping the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Community among Christians doesn’t happen automatically—it’s something we have to cultivate and nurture.

Have another volunteer read EPHESIANS 4:7-16.

What does it look like for God to impart His grace in different ways to different people?

What’s the purpose of diversity within Christian community? Why is it essential to the mission?

In verses 11-13 of Ephesians 4, Paul lists some of the different spiritual gifts Christ gives His followers. Paul also makes it clear that the purpose of these gifts is for building up the body of Christ, not for personal gain or glory. Often we see people become prideful because of their gifts, while others feel their gifts are inferior and become ashamed. God gives us those gifts intentionally for us to use.

Commentary

4:1 The word therefore is the pivot word for the entire epistle. Paul was saying, “On the basis of everything I have written so far, certain results should follow.” The verb walk reminds us that holy living is a daily process. The term worthy shows us that we aim toward a high standard.

4:2 Four attitudes are essential to the Christian’s worthy walk—humility, gentleness, patience, and love. Humility is the lowliness of mind that sees other people as valuable. Gentleness refers to strength under control. Patience means slowness to avenge a wrong or to retaliate when hurt by another. Love is the famous Greek noun agape, the John 3:16 kind of sacrificial concern for others that sent Jesus willingly to the cross.

4:3 The unity of the spirit already exists. It was brought about historically by Christ’s cross. We experience it by God’s Spirit. Thus we do not have to manufacture unity; rather we are to work at diligently keeping it. This happens as we focus our energy on expressing the peace that binds us to God and to one another (Col. 3:15). Christians are not called to create spiritual unity but rather to demonstrate it through relational unity.

4:4-6 The sevenfold repetition of “one” in these verses is striking. The bottom line is that Christian unity (one body, one hope, one faith, and one baptism) arises out of the Trinitarian unity of God (one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father—listed in the reverse of our usual order).

4:7 The grace of God saved us (2:8). Furthermore, He continues to work in each one of us believers, enabling the worthy walk. Our unity is not the same as uniformity. Diversity is expressed by the great variety of spiritual gifts that the risen Lord has given. The measure of the Messiah’s gift means that He has distributed spiritual gifts to believers according to His plan, not according to our wishes.

4:8 Paul quoted Psalm 68:18 as the biblical precedent to explain the Lord’s giving gifts to His people. This psalm celebrated a great military victory in which David praised God as the true King who had led Israel to victory. In ancient times, victorious kings often ascended to their throne with great pomp and with bound war captives following them (He took prisoners into captivity). These kings also received the spoils of war and distributed them to their own people (He gave gifts to people). In Paul’s thinking, this was comparable to what Jesus did in His victory over death.

4:9 In His exaltation, the Lord Jesus is like an ancient king who had led his people to victory. The words He ascended point to Jesus’ ascension after His victorious resurrection (Luke 24:51). In Paul’s teaching, Jesus’ ascent (from earth to heaven) necessarily implied a previous descent (from heaven to earth). Thus the words He descended to the lower parts of the earth most likely refer to His incarnation, when God’s Son humbled Himself and took on humanity.

4:10 Paul was more interested in highlighting Christ’s ascent than His descent. His victorious ascent is greater than that of any mere earthly king, for He ascended far above all the heavens. He has taken His position at the Father’s right hand (Heb. 1:1-3). Furthermore, there is no place in the universe from which He is excluded, for He fills all things.

4:11 Our exalted Lord has distributed gifts as He wishes. Although each believer has at least one spiritual gift, Paul focused on the gifted leaders Jesus personally gave so that congregations will grow. Apostles refers to those Christ personally commissioned. Prophets spoke messages inspired by God (3:5). Evangelists can make the gospel especially clear and relevant to unbelievers. Every Christian is called on

to be a witness for Christ, but some are especially capable in this area. Pastors and teachers provide leadership for local congregations.

4:12 To what end has the Lord given congregations gifted leaders? The goal is that they will train the saints in the work of the ministry. It's not that the leaders do all the ministry; rather the ministry is to be done by all believers working together.

4:13 In 4:3 Paul had urged believers to be "diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit." Now the term unity occurs as one goal toward which believers (with diverse gifts) are working together. This unity is both doctrinal (in the faith) and relational (in the knowledge of God's son).



*There are free Go Deeper Devotionals available at our Resource Center. The Go Deeper Devotionals will take you through the Bible over a period of three years. There is a commentary for every chapter of the Bible. Reading the commentary will give you some background before reading the scripture text. We encourage you to use the devotionals. Grab as many months as you wish. Share them with your friends, neighbors. Dive into God's word. **Psalm 119:105 - You're word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.***