

One: Introduction

Ephesians 4:1-6:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 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, who is over all and through all and in all.

Chris read the passage above and started with the question of “Why ‘One’?”

Paul’s perspective was sharpened by crisis. He was a prisoner, but he also was well aware of the chaos and confusion of the culture around him. This helped shape the priorities he had for his readers. Those priorities centered around two aspects of their lives: they needed to be right with God, and right with one another.

Jared reminded us about our series on “Love Is” from January 2024. Paul was speaking into the same cultural chaos and confusion in I Corinthians 13. His ideas on love were constant throughout his letters. In Philippians 2: 1-4 Paul says this:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

The next phrase we looked at was “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit”. Notice we are made one by God, and we are to keep, not create unity. This is the unity of Spirit, not unity of understanding or interpretation. The Spirit unifies. This is ongoing and progressive.

Jared next discussed “One Body” and how that body has many parts. He was reminded about a relief mission to Oklahoma following a tornado. Everyone had a part to do, and because each part was different, each could focus on their efforts, coming together as one force for restoration.

“One Spirit” led us to continue our thoughts on unity mentioned before. Chris took us back to the “silent DeeJay” discussion from Jared’s sermon on “Open to the Spirit” several weeks ago. People who had the same music playing in their headsets were unified by their shared experience. The indwelling is transforming. Transformation makes us fit together like pieces of

a jigsaw puzzle. The Spirit does not fill the gaps or change our outward shape, but it fills us and makes us interlock more perfectly despite our shapes. Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18:

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Jared discussed One Hope, and immediately took us to the "Living Hope". He used an analogy about balloons from his father. Three different balloons—one with just air, one with a hole in it, and one filled with helium—stood for "no hope", "false hope", and "living hope". 1 Peter 1:3 says this:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade...

"One Lord" is next, and Chris discussed a scene from "The Forge" in which a new Christian has to make a choice about whether to hold onto something that was separating him from God. He said "either Jesus is Lord, or he is not". "Lord" is a position, not just a title. He must be the ruler of our lives. This is about our deeds, not our words.

"One Faith" refers to something that might be carried out differently but is still one. Jared plugged our "James" study in our adult classes this year, and reminded us how James and Paul use the same story about Abraham to show two different things about faith. On the surface it looks like they conflict; but on closer inspection, Paul is showing how salvation is attained, and James is showing how salvation is demonstrated in us. In Ephesians 2, Paul says we are saved by faith, not by works, but then says we are created by God to do good works.

"One Baptism" speaks into the corporate nature of Baptism. We all went in the same water. The Jews were familiar with baptism, but it served a different purpose. Look at I Corinthians 10: 1-5:

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

This baptism in the sea and cloud was for all; and it made them uniform in a sense. That baptism was not transforming them on the inside, though. We choose a baptism which changes us forever.

Then we looked at “One God and Father of all, over all, in all, and through all”. Thinking back to our John study this time last year, we learned that God is transcendent. Chris then asked us to look at:

1. The “Dye” of God’s Presence: God is so thoroughly permeating our being that we take on a visible color of his nature.
2. The “Die” of God’s Presence: Scripture is clear. “No one can see me and live” -Exodus 33:20. We encounter God fully, and this means that we die daily to ourselves.

Jared took us back to the beginning of the passage. “Live a Life Worthy...” is a subtle transition from the first three chapters of Ephesians about what God has done, to the impact of God’s work on our lives individually and as a whole. This is shown in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

We wrapped up by reading the passage from Ephesians 4 one last time. We pray that this year we be one—One with God, One in Spirit, One in Christ, One with each other.