



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Ephesians

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The Anchors of Our Unity

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Well you know LifeGroups are really important to us and we want to get a good start to the New Year, by encouraging any of you who have yet to find your way into a smaller group than Sunday morning. LifeGroup Launch is on the 27th and so you have a few weeks just to get online, get on the website, sign up for that. We'll help you at least take some steps in figuring out how do we find the group that fits for us and we'll trust that once that process starts you'll be able to find that LifeGroup.

Hey, let's open up to Ephesians chapter 4. And let's always remember, that this is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to 1st century Christians. And what we know about the Christians that Paul is writing this letter to is that they were really discouraged in their faith. They were getting more and more discouraged because of the hostility, the growing hostility toward the church as well as the destructive immorality that was so pervasive in their culture. And I think that's what makes this a letter that is so relevant for us today, is as we're trying to live out our Christian life and this time, in this place, the book of Ephesians is very good for us to become very familiar with. Now as we've already seen in these past several months of Sunday's the first three chapters Paul's making sure that when we experienced this, when we experienced just the growing rejection of the church by the culture as well as the growing immorality around us, the first three chapters Paul wants to make sure that we have a clear understanding of our theology. And he reminds us of what God's done to save us, as well as what he's promised us who hope in him. And now as we've entered into the second three chapters of Ephesians, chapters four through six, Paul is transitioning us from having the right thinking in the midst of the culture we live out our faith in, to having the right living. There is a way that God has called us to live and he's

going to tell us that there are two foundational anchors for Christian Living in the face of persecution. He's going to tell us that those two anchors of our faith are our unity as a church and the purity of our personal lives. And he's going to talk about our unity first and then towards the end of chapter 4 and forward he's going to talk a lot about what purity looks like in our lives, especially in our everyday lives.

He wants us to know that both of these things our unity and our purity are critical if we're going to live faithfully and joyfully in this world, instead of retreating away from it or, instead of just trying to blend in so that nobody notices; unity and purity. And today we're going to get a start on this whole discussion of our unity. If your Bibles are ready and you're open to Ephesians 4, let's stand for the reading of God's word. We're going to back up to verse one just because it's one long sentence and I want us to begin at the beginning of the sentence. We covered the first two versus last Sunday, it says *"I, therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. I want you to walk in a manner that is with all humility and gentleness with patience bearing with one another in love. I want you to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is overall. And through all and in all"*.

Let's go ahead and stop there. Father in Heaven we do praise you that you are our Heavenly Father. God I just pray with all my heart that you would calm our hearts that God you would comfort us. We're where we desperately need it today. God you would just give us clear thoughts, clearer vision Lord for what your word means for us now. I pray God that we would leave here more courageous, more confident, more comforted, by what you have to teach us in Christ name. Amen.

Now, before we jump all the way into what this means for us, I want to answer the question; *"what does our unity have to do with thriving in the face of discouragement, why unity?"* Why does he bring this topic up first when he starts talking to us about how to live our lives in this world, our Christian lives? Well the first reason Scripture tells us is that the spread of the Gospel depends on our unity. You see our evangelism it's really dead in the water if God's people are fighting, if God's people are unloving. The spread of the Gospel is incredibly hindered. And that's what Jesus is praying about in John 17. You remember in John 17, we call it the high priestly prayer right before Jesus was crucified. He prays a prayer to the father, and we have those words written down. And I want you to look at the screen. Jesus is praying to his father. He says, *"Father I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me"*

through their word, that they may all be one.” There is our unity. And he says, “so that the world may believe that you have sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.”

Isn't it amazing thought that that Christian unity and evangelism are partners. They go together. The one empowers the other. The reason unity our unity is so important is that our evangelism, the spread of the Gospel depends on it. There's another reason though, just as importantly if not more, second reason why our unity is so critical is because the glory of God depends on it. You see the beauty of God's holiness, and love, and, grace, and mercy, and justice, all become visible to our world through our unity with each other. I want you to feel the weight of the purpose and the necessity for our unity. 1 the spread of the Gospel depends on it; two God becomes visible to the world through it. In Romans 15 we read these words, *“may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another that together you may with one voice glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another, love one another, except one another as Christ has welcomed you for the glory of God.”* Amazing. You see in God's plan our rejection by the world is never an obstacle to our evangelism. You see our unity, in the face of rejection and persecution and in face of the growing hostility of the world toward God and the Church and Jesus, our unity is the gold platter on which we deliver the gospel of Jesus and display the glory of God.

That would explain Proverbs 6:19 wouldn't it where we're told in Proverbs 6:19, that God hates discord and division among the brothers. Is it any wonder then that Paul starts out this whole section on right, Christian living in the face of rejection in a morality by exhorting us to be anchored together in unity? Now did you notice in verse 3, did you notice that unity isn't something we're expected to create or even define? God doesn't call us to create unity. Our responsibility is look at verse 3, *“too eagerly maintain the unity that is already ours in the spirit”*. Unity is already provided by God. Our job is to *maintain* it which would assume that we have the power to destroy it, if we're not careful. Now look at this word *eager*. It's an amazing word. Sometimes I surprise myself. I look up these words and I think while “eager” that just means “eager”, but then you look it up and it means like a lot of stuff. The word *eager* at its depth it means to spare no effort. It's a continuous, ongoing, diligent, activity with urgency, and passion attached to it. That's how deep the roots of this word go. So, when Paul says hey we've got to be eager to maintain it we've got to be passionate about unity. We've got to be urgent about unity. We've got to be diligent to maintain the unity that is already ours. And so, the question before us then is this *“how are we already united together and how do we eagerly maintain the peace that unity provides us”?*

Well it's right here in the scripture. The first thing Paul is telling us here is we are already united by the spirit. That's what he says in verse 4. He says *"there is one body and one spirit just as you were called to the one hope."* Jesus spoke in John Chapter 7 about the spirit whom those who believing in him would receive, scripture is very clear, all believers receive the Holy Spirit when we repent and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Every single Christian has been given God's very own Holy Spirit to dwell in us. That Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, spiritually fits us together Paul says, in one body. And this is how we are to maintain our unity. We are one body. Verse 4, said another way the Holy Spirit and dwells us, and grafts us, into one church. And so spiritually speaking we don't exist separated from each other. That's why 1 Corinthians 12 says this, *"for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"*.

In Romans 12:5 we read, *"so we through though many are one body one body in Christ and individually members all belonging to one another"*. I don't know about you, but I love the metaphor of the human body describing church unity. And Paul develops that image at great length in 1 Corinthians 12 where he emphasizes that all of our body parts, although they're really different from each other, they all work together. They all work together. Even though all these parts of the body, the thousands of them, that there are so different from one another. And he takes that obvious example and he applies it to us as a church in First Corinthians 12:24- 25 he says, *"God has combined us all together and given us on and given honor to the parts that lacked it so that there should be no division. All the parts of the church should have the same care for each other. If one member suffers we all suffer together and if one member is honored we all rejoice together."*

You see the gospel of Jesus the salvation in Jesus is magnified and God is glorified when we eagerly maintain the anchor of our unity in the spirit by faithfully serving and worshipping God together in church, as one body. Let me say that again the way we eagerly maintain our unity is we acknowledge, and we rejoice in the fact that God has made us one. And in this oneness, we serve and worship God. That is our unity. Now the opposite of this must also be true, right? When Christians abandon the church when believers go rogue and say "you know what I got the Jesus thing me and Jesus man we're good. You know we're good at you have you ever seen people you know like yeah I love Jesus I believe in Jesus his church his bride I don't want anything to do with that". Well according to Paul and the rest of scripture we don't have that option. And so, when we go rogue or we say, "hey I'm a Christian I just don't want the church." Paul is saying that is incredibly divisive and it seriously hurts our testimony to the world.

We have a lot of Christians out there running around saying “hey Jesus is cool” and then the world looks at them and they don't see anything else except their lips moving, and there's no nothing else going on, especially unity in the body. And so, because we're united by a spirit, we are one body. But he also says because we're united by the Holy Spirit in us, we have one common hope. Now what he says one hope that belongs to your call. Now, Paul's already talked at length about hope in the first three chapters, so he doesn't even he doesn't dwell on it long here. But we even read in chapter one verse 18 where Paul is praying that we would never lose sight of the hope that is ours. And I want you to see something for yourself just turn back to chapter 1 of Ephesians verse 12, look for chapter 1:12, end and he talks about our hope here he says *“so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him, in Jesus you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it”*.

So, the question is here, what possession is the Holy Spirit in us guaranteeing? What is the hope of our possession? Well John 3:16 makes it a little obvious *right “for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish eternal life”*. That's the possession that is ours, that is the hope that we are unified in. And the Hebrew writer talks about this incredibly in 6: 19. He says *“I strongly encourage you to hold fast to the Hope set before us. We have this is a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul hope that enters into the inner place”*. This is where the hope that we have enters into, it's a soul level hope. And so, we eagerly maintain the anchor of our unity in the spirit by holding fast to the all-consuming, all glorifying, hope of our inheritance which is eternal life. And when we do that when we hang onto that hope, we maintain our unity.

And so Paul is saying here that we're united by the Holy Spirit in us, that unity is maintained by our commitment to the church where the Holy Spirit has put us and made us all one, as well as we maintain our unity by maintaining our hope clinging to the hope of eternal life. Now listen it's easy to fall into the trap of putting our hope in a lot of other things, isn't it? We live out in this world that's becoming more and more and more hostile to God and the Church and Jesus it's if we get overwhelmed with all these false promises of hope. The world keeps telling us you know now your hope you got get your financial future in place you've got to get enough to retire. The world will say listen it's all about your career path you got to get that right degree or degrees and be on the right career path. That's where your

hope that the world would say no no no, your hope depends on the diet you're on. Listen I've never seen more commercials for diets in the last two weeks and my whole life. And all of them are promising the same thing great results, fast results, joy for your life you'll be happier. This is your hope. Just diet like this. I mean it's very easy for us to listen to all this screaming at us and put our hope and stuff that so much less than that hope that enters the inner place. And so, we are already united by the Holy Spirit. Made one in the body and given any eternal hope.

The second reason that we must be eager to maintain our unity is because we are already united in the Son. Contrary to public opinion, we are absolutely united by the truth that Jesus is God in the flesh. That's what he's saying here in verse 5-chapter 4 verse 5. Paul says *"now there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism."* He's saying listen Jesus is the only way to have our sins forgiven. He's our only justification. He's the way and the truth and the life, and no one can go to heaven no one can come to God the Father except by him. There is no pope, there is no priest, there is no idol, there is no statue, there is no ritual, that can make peace with God for us. That can take away our sins. There is no amount of piety, there's no amount of philanthropy, there's no amount of our you know making ourselves holy enough or pure enough and that can save us, only his shed blood. That's what unifies us. There is *one* Savior. Not many saviors with many names just one. Paul says that's what unifies us. We agree to that. We don't create that, we don't invent that, we maintain that. And because we are united in one Lord, Paul says in verse 5 that we have one common faith. Now Paul doesn't have in mind here when he says one Lord, one faith, he doesn't have in mind here saving faith. When a person believes in Jesus what Paul means by faith here is the whole body of doctrine. The whole body of belief that we believe to be true. Christianity only has one basis for truth, only one common understanding of the life, and death, and resurrection, and soon return in coming judgment of Jesus and that comes from God's revealed Word. God reveals the truth to us and therefore we have one common faith, because we have one common truth, the Word of God.

In Jude chapter 1 verse 3, Jude writes *"beloved although I was eager to write to you about our common salvation that's saving faith there I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith"*. That's the faith Paul is talking about any fees in chapter 4 verse 5. Jude says I need to write to you to contain content to maintain the unity that we have in one common faith that was once for all delivered to the Saints. Nothing in all the world is more important or more valuable to us than the truth, than our faith in the doctrinal truth that makes up what we believe in the church is supposed to be the pillar and guardians of this truth.

John MacArthur rightly warns the church today. He says “the idea that the Christian gospel should be fluid and evolving is especially virtuous to the younger generations, who are in tune with the culture and in love with the spirit of the age and can't stand to have authoritative biblical truth applied with precision as a corrective to worldly lifestyles and unholy minds and ungodly behavior and the poison of this perspective is being injected into the evangelical church today.” He is exactly right. Whenever we think that somehow the truth that we have that we call our one faith, is somehow still evolving and changing, we bring a poison into the church that threatens our unity. It amazes me. Now, I would only disagree with MacArthur on this one point. On this basis that it isn't just the younger generations doing this to the church today. The American Church is a mess and it's disunified, not from the forces from outside but from the forces inside at all generations. And especially and most grievously, many pastors who are standing up in front of their people on a regular basis deciding for their people that somehow 4000 years of orthodox interpretation of the scripture was wrong, that we were wrong all along and now he suddenly has the true and evolving understanding of what it means. Paul says you contend against that, you don't tolerate that. The Holy Spirit didn't make any mistakes. The Holy Spirit didn't forget to take into account that our sinful natures would just get more sinful. So, we are unified by the fact that we believe this is where our faith comes from.

We maintain the anchor of our unity by contending for the truth and by not allowing traditions, or political correctness, or cultural pressures, or proud, and arrogant, preachers to compromise our common faith. We're unified in our call and commitment to proclaim and live the truth. We are not free to edit it for our own carnal purposes. When we do that, we destroy our unity. Now because we are united in Jesus, we have one common faith. And Paul says we have one common baptism. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. Now there is one baptism among all believers. That's a spiritual baptism. This is this is what he's talking about in verse 4 when he's when he talks about the fact that we are all one body, the Holy Spirit immerses us or baptize us into one church together. That's a spiritual type of baptism. But there's also one water baptism and that's what he's talking about in verse five here. One Lord one faith one baptism. This is the command of Jesus for all believers to publicly and physically confess our faith and allegiance and unity to Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Those who by one Lord, in one faith, testify to our faith by, one baptism. And this makes sense right because baptism is that beautiful picture of the of the death and burial of Jesus, when you go under that water it's the picture of Christ death. It's the picture of what he did to remove our sins. And then when we come up out of the water what is that a picture of the

resurrection living a new life. Sins gone, sins past, now taking off the old putting on the new. That's the closest we will ever come to having to die for ourselves. We are picturing in a unified manner what Jesus has done for us.

In Matthew 28 we remember Jesus came and said to them, *“all the authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”*, all authority. And then he says *“go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to obey all that I commanded you”*. And so how do we eagerly maintain our unity? We do that by confirming it in our one common baptism. Now the opposite of this must also be true when believers refuse to be baptized, you are in essence bringing disunity into the church. And confusion to those who are becoming followers of Jesus and they see these commands, and they hear the teaching, and then they look around and they say *“but why aren't all these people baptized?”* And I slowed down when I said the word commanded. Because when you read when you read Paul is writing here there is one Lord, one faith, we agree. One savior all of you yelled *“amen!”* and we agreed there's one common faith. I lifted up the Bible, and you almost stood up, but then when I said baptism it was eerily quiet, as though it's in parentheses. It's right there. It's this joyful expression of our unity with one another. And I think that you would expect me to ask today *“are you a believer and if you are you baptized?”*

The third reason we must be eager to maintain our unity, first because we're already unified by the Spirit, we're already unified in the Son, and we are already united in the Father. Verse 6, Paul reminds us that we are already united because God is the one Father of us all. You see that one God and Father of all. Now when Paul says this, he is referring to all Christians, not every person in the world. God is certainly preeminent over everyone and everything in the world, but God is not the Father of everyone. He is the father of his redeemed children, who have come to him, and he has adopted us by faith in his Son. Paul says, *“Could we have any better unity than that?”* We all have the same dad, we are united in that. It's exactly the same for all of us. We're one because he has redeemed us and adopted us to be his own.

Now that has incredible implications to it. How do we eagerly maintain that? Well first of all, we see here that if God is our father, then he is to reign over us. He says *“he is one God and Father of all who is over all”*, he is to reign over us. We are unified by our steadfast commitment to submit to and surrender to him as totally sovereign. That's how we maintain our unity. We don't make up the idea that

God is our Father, God does. He tells us I am your Father. You are my sons and daughters. We don't have to, we don't have to defend that. We just proclaim that and then we maintain our unity by all eagerly being committed to his rule, and his law, and his glory, as being our joy. It is our joy to obey and glorify the one who adopted us and redeemed us. We would rather actually obey God more than man if man tries to convince us to obey them instead of God, because God's faithfulness to us reaches to the heavens, amen? And his mercy and his justice are *our* rewards.

And so I ask, are you submitted to his rule and reign over your whole life? Because that's how we maintain our unity. Is he the lord over your thought life? Is he sovereign over your dating life? Is he sovereign over your financial life or your career path? or the entertainment part of your life? Over all your life? Or is he just sovereign over your Sunday mornings? Paul says be *eager* to maintain the unity that we already have. He is our Father, so we joyfully submit to Him as our sovereign. Paul is not quite done with that yet. If he's our Father, then he has to work through us. He is over us and through all. Overall and through all. We're unified when we believe that we are all instruments in the hands of our Redeemer. We're all his servants, gifted by him, to do his work to be ambassadors of his Son. That's where we and how we maintain our unity. We see ourselves all of us not just the few, not just those who aren't as busy as us, but we see everyone in the body as instruments including ourselves in his hands. And again, the application is so clear. Are you serving your God in his church? Because I think the opposite would be true, if we refuse to engage in maintaining our unity by allowing God to work through us, we are actually being divisive now.

Paul's point is not here to separate the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity, but he wants to acknowledge that the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *in us* is the basis for our unity. So therefore we don't define it, we don't create it. Paul wants us to remember the church, we are God's church, it is God's church, it's composed of God's people, saved by God's Son's death on the cross, and the church exists for his glory so that the world may know that he loves them. That's why we're here. And in our unity, and we'll see in a few weeks our purity, is all these are essential for that to effect the world. And that's what allows us to live courageously, and faithfully, and joyfully, and not retreat, from the world not just try to blend into the world, but to live in unity for God's glory and the spread of his gospel.

All week just thinking and preparing for this moment in the service, I thought what's the most obvious application what's the most obvious response? How do we take what we just heard? And I would

assume most of us already believed. But how do we move forward from here? I think there are two very simple decisions that I think some of you can make today to continue to eagerly maintain the unity of the church. First, there are so many of you now especially in the last year or so where you're so you're starting to sense this is your church home. This is for now. This is where God has you and your worshipping here and maybe if you have kids, they're starting to find their way and plugging in. And I would say to you the most obvious response to this message is its time to step over the line, declare your unity in one body, and say help me fit in, where's my place? I'm one of the parts, I want God to work through me in this church.

Now on Saturday February 9th I teach the Discover Canyon Hills membership class here two or three times a year and I would encourage you if you haven't done this yet. Right now, at the beginning of 2019 get online today when you get home and sign up and say OK, find out how do I figure out where I fit in this body easy enough simple step. You're here already, now eagerly maintain the unity of the church. And there's a second response, I think very necessary for today. And it would be the answer to the question already asked, "Are you a believer in Jesus?" And if your answer to that is yes, "are you baptized?" It's a yes or no question right. If you're not baptized, then let's do it. Jesus commanded it. It's essential for our unity. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. What's stopping you? Eagerly maintain the unity.

I would encourage you at the end of this service. We're going to have some people standing up here as we always do every Sunday. And here's my here's my call to you, if you're a follower of Jesus and you haven't been baptized, I want to call you before you walk out of the room walk forward. Walk up to one of these people that are going to be standing here and simply say "hey what's the next step?" And all they're going to do is get your name and email address and we'll just help you know what that process is it's simple. It's not complicated. It's time. Eagerly maintain the unity of the faith.

Let's pray. Father in Heaven, I thank you that everything necessary for our unity is already true. Thank you, that your Holy Spirit is in us making us one body. Thank you, that your son Jesus is our Lord, giving us one faith, and one baptism. And thank you, that you are sovereign Heavenly Father. God you are over us, and you work through us. I pray God that this would be a church passionate about that which unifies us. Help us God to be eager. We love you and thank you for all of your blessings in Christ name. Amen. So here they are, there's some people up here all you have to do is walk up there and say, "hey

help me take the first step”, give us your name and email address and we'll take it from there. God bless you. Look forward to seeing you next Sunday.