

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

Since Mother's Day, we've been journeying through the book of Ephesians together. As we've said earlier in the series, the Book of Ephesians is divided into two halves. The first three chapters are all about who you are in Christ. These chapters are theological, describing your identity in Christ. The second half of the book talks about why all of this matters. In other words, what does it look like practically to walk with Christ daily? So today, let's jump into the book's second half together and look at our calling to love and serve within the church.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. In Ephesians 4:1-2, Paul calls us to live a life worthy of our calling. What is our calling? What does it mean to walk "worthy" of it?

The word "walk" is crucial as we begin to turn to the second half of Ephesians – it will show up several times as we move toward the end of our series. To "walk" or "live" a life worthy of our calling simply means we're to conduct our lives in a way congruent with our faith in Jesus – as we go in life. To walk is to practice the way of Jesus at home, in the workplace, while driving down the highway, sitting on the sidelines of our kids' ballgames, etc. It's important to note that this admonishment from Paul is for all Christ's followers – not just those with the unique calling of serving in vocational ministry. In short, we're to see our circumstances through the lens of Christ just as Paul does when he refers to himself as a "prisoner for the Lord" – his circumstances didn't dictate how he conducted his life – his faith did.

3. How do you know if you're walking in rhythm with this calling? What practical things make it challenging to live in rhythm with our calling?

You know that you're practicing the way of Jesus or living in rhythm with your calling when your life is characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit. In other words, when we practice the way of Jesus, we will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit just as He did in His life. Jesus was humble, gentle, patient, and loving. When we live lives that are out of step with Jesus because we allow our schedules or other circumstances to dictate our lives and behaviors, we'll find it challenging to live in rhythm with our calling as Christians – those who abide in Him.

4. In Ephesians 4:3-6, Paul urges us to make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit. What is the unity of the Spirit? Why do you think this may have been a challenge for the church in Ephesus? Why is it a challenge for us today? What does it take for us to maintain unity? What does it mean that unity doesn't mean uniformity?

When we are born again, we're filled with the Spirit and brought into a unified spiritual family by the blood of Jesus. The gospel unifies believers, as diverse as we are, into the family of God. The church at Ephesus would have likely struggled to maintain unity, just as many do today because the Gentiles and Jews had plenty of differences but were now living as "one" because of their faith in Jesus. So, Paul calls upon them and us to work diligently to maintain our unity. Similarly, when my children are at odds with one another, I often say, "Hey, don't forget, we're all on the same team in this house." This "same team" spirit has to be maintained because dozens of opportunities come up throughout the day or week that will test this spirit of "same team." After all, we have different preferences, personalities, etc.

5. In Ephesians 4:7-10, Paul says that Christ has given gifts to His people. Do you know what spiritual gift Christ has given you? Why did Jesus give these gifts? How are you using your gift to build the church?

Paul says that every believer in Christ has been given a spiritual gift, a kind of grace from Jesus to the church. It is a grace of Jesus to give us spiritual gifts to use in the church to build one another up. Just as Christ gave gifts to the church, we should, in turn, exercise our gifts for the sake of the church. When used to build up the church, these gifts are an extension of Christ Himself – continuing to minister to the church at large. When you are not using your gift to serve the church, the church isn't what it could be. Every gift is necessary, valuable, and needed within the church.

6. In Ephesians 4:11-13 and 16, Paul describes a few specific gifts/roles that Jesus gave the church. Why were these gifts/roles given? How can you help those with these specific roles to fulfill their calling as they serve the church?

Within the church, all are equal in value to God, and all have spiritual gifts, but some people have particular gifts/roles that are to be used in leadership of the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. The primary responsibilities of those called to serve the church in this manner are to teach, nurture, protect, serve, sacrifice for the church, and equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

7. How does Ephesians 4:13-15 help us understand what it means to be spiritually mature? What role does the church play in helping you move toward spiritual maturity? What role do you play personally?

By making every effort, Paul wants us all to grow and mature in our faith. Unfortunately, many people are pretty comfortable with their level of spirituality and do not invest in their spiritual growth – seeking more of God for their lives. As we mature in our faith, we become more and more aware of our need for more growth in Christ - always desiring to grow closer to Him (John 3:30).

8. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on applying in your life this week?