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Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0:00] Isn't it? You know, we've been the last few weeks, what have we been talking about?! We've been in the book of Ephesians, but what is the overall theme,! What have we been looking at in Ephesians, those of you that have been here?

Family. The importance of family. And as we come together each and every Sunday morning, Wednesday night Bible study, Thursday morning during the winter, whenever we come together, we are family, aren't we?

From the youngest one that's here to the oldest one that's here, we are family. And that is a special thing, isn't it? And I know I mentioned all the young ones that are here, and Ron said thank you to all the parents that bring their children, but we're going to take that one step further just for a minute.

If you're sitting near a parent that has a child with them, thank them this morning for bringing their kids. Go ahead and do that. You've got a second to do that. Or grandkids or whatever the situation may be.

It is a special thing, and I've always thought this as a pastor, to be able to look out and just see families together.

[1:16] To see families sitting together, to see families worshiping together. What a powerful thing. Because it flies in the face, and it is so opposite of everything that Satan desires to do.

Because what Satan desires to do, he wants to tear apart. He wants to take families. That love and that bond that they have, or that they should have. And what does Satan want to do with that?

He wants to destroy it. He wants to tear it apart. He wants children to be upset with their parents, and parents upset with their children, and siblings upset with siblings, aunts and uncles upset with each other, cousins, whatever.

God does not want the family to be together and to be... God does want that. Satan does not. He wants to tear apart. So when we come together, and you see families worshiping together, that is something to praise God for.

And I praise God for that this morning. Alright, that is not, however, the message. If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians. We have been going through Ephesians, and we are now into Ephesians chapter 4.

[2:16] And although the book of Ephesians is not necessarily just about family, there are so many things in Ephesians that speaks to families. Not just our physical families, but this family.

The church family. The church body. And Ephesians chapter 4 is no different. So if you found Ephesians chapter 4, I'm going to ask if you're able, if you would stand this morning as we read God's Word.

Ephesians chapter 4, beginning in the first verse, and this is what God's Word shares. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

For there is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all. But to every one of you is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore, he says, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

[3:37] Now that he ascended, what is it? But that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we hereafter be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.

And then I'd have you jump down to verse 31. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.

Let's pray. Lord God, once again, we thank you for this day that you have chosen to give us. You have put this opportunity in front of us. And Lord, this service is an opportunity.

[5:20] Whenever your message is read, it is an opportunity. And we can choose to think about other things, we can choose to let our minds wander, or we can choose to take advantage of the opportunity and listen to your word and take it to heart and allow it to have an impact on our lives and how we think and how we act.

And Lord, I pray that we would do that this morning. that our ears and our hearts and our minds would be open to your word and that you would use it just to mold us to be not just the people, but the family that you want us to be, your family.

So Lord, just speak to our hearts on this morning. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. You can be seated this morning. There are some things that sometimes we need reminded of.

If you remember, we talked last week about God does two things that both start with R. Whenever He speaks to us, He can reveal things to us, and that is Him telling us something new, something that we didn't know before, giving us an understanding that we didn't have, so God can reveal.

But the other thing He also does that we needed to do is what? Remind. God can remind us of things. And this morning as we look at His word, one of the things that He reminds us, or maybe reveals, is the fact that you and I, did you understand this, that we are part of a family business.

[6:49] Did you know that? Did you know that? What do you think of when you hear the word family business? What comes to your mind? Anything?

Hard work? Do you know anybody, or maybe you, do you know anyone that's been part of a family business? How does that go? It's all easy because you're family, right?

If it's a family business, they all get along better because they're family, right? That's not always the case, is it? Some of you snicker when I say that. You know, I know that there are all kinds of television shows that we can watch, and reality TV, and whatever.

I know that many years ago, and you all know, I enjoy riding motorcycles. I just, I like everything about motorcycles. Judge me for that if you want, but I enjoy them. There was, thanks Scott.

There was a TV show that was on, and we watched some. The language was bad, so we didn't watch all of it. But it was called American Chopper, I think.

[7:56] And it was a family business, these guys that did motorcycles. You know what I remember most from the shows that I watched? Bickering, arguing, fighting, things being thrown, and I'm sure part of it was for TV, but it was obvious.

These people did not get along. Even though they were father and sons, or whatever the situation was, being family does not guarantee that we're going to get along, does it? And I have known over the years people that were part of family businesses, and it is hard.

You know, if you're an employer, and you have employees that are not family, and they don't do their job, what do you do? They're out the door. You have people you work with that are family,

what do you do?

Yeah, it's harder, isn't it? You might kick them out the door if you can, or if they're an equal part. It's a challenge. But look in verse 1 of what we shared in Ephesians chapter 4.

I therefore, and again Paul is writing this, a prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. A vocation is a job, isn't it?

[9:01] And he says to walk worthy of the job to which you have been called, and he's speaking to believers. If you are a believer, you have been called to a job. You've been given a job. And guess what?

We're all employed by the same person. We're all given that vocation by the same person. And who is that? God. God. And we've been talking through Ephesians that we were all adopted.

When you accept Jesus Christ, you are adopted into the family. So that makes us what? Brothers and sisters. We are brothers and sisters. Doesn't matter the age difference sometimes.

It doesn't matter. We're all equal. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. So if we are brothers and sisters and God has given us a job and he is the one that gives us all that job, what does that mean?

It means we're in a family business, doesn't it? That we are in this together. That God has given us this job to do. That we need to take seriously.

[10:01] Because it says to walk what? Worthy of this vocation. Not vacation. It's summer. You can tell what I got on my mind. To walk worthy of this job that God has given us.

That means that as we think about this job that God has given us, we need to do it in the right way. Isn't that what that means? There is a right way of doing it and a wrong way of doing it.

Walk worthy of the vocation to where you have been called. But he goes on then in verse 2 and tells us how we are to do this job that God has given us as family.

Look in verse 2. With all lowliness and meekness. So what does that mean? We are to do it with humility.

Do it with humility. Is that always easy or is that hard? You know, so often in these family businesses and whatever show you watch where they have a family business, part of the problem is sometimes they have differing ideas on how to do things, right?

[11:09] And then the real question gets to be who is in charge. Who gets to say what everybody else does. Who gets their way and who doesn't. Does that ever happen within the church body?

Who gets their way and who doesn't when there is a disagreement? Who has more say? Who has less say? Who can get more people on their side to agree with them? Does that ever happen in the life of a church?

Yes. Very easily. Whenever we begin to let our own human spirit, our own desire to get our own way, when we start to go down that road, do you know what we do not have?

Meekness and lowliness. Because true humility and lowliness, what does that mean? Does that mean we're always concerned about getting our own way?

Or does it mean we're more concerned about others than our own self? Which does that truly mean? Nobody wants to answer that? You know, there's another verse that talks about this too.

[12:12] It says, Let each esteem others more highly than themselves. This flies in the face of what we're taught and what we feel most of the time. What does it mean to esteem others more highly than ourselves?

What does that mean? You can talk. This is a question I'm asking you. What does that mean? To put others first. That's a great thing to say, isn't it? And as Christians, we know we're supposed to put others first.

Is there ever a difference between knowing it and actually doing it? As believers, God calls us not to know this, but to do this.

That as we do this job together as God's family, that we are to do it with lowliness and meekness. And then he adds something else. Not just with humility, but what does he say after that?

And here's the kicker. We're all really good at this one. Long-suffering. Another word for patience. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you put yourself on the patience scale with other people?

[13:24] Where would you put your spouse? No, don't answer that. But seriously, the only one that we can answer for and that God wants us to

answer for is ourselves. Where would you put yourself on the patience scale with other people?

If we are going to take seriously walking worthy of this job that God has given us, then we need to take seriously how patient we are to other people.

And that does mean other people within the family. People that are in this same vocation that God has called us to. How patient are we with each other? Do you think God is playing when he talks about this or do you think God means it?

Folks, he means it. If you think about your level of patience with others within the life of the church, if it's down at the bottom, you best be working on it. Because God doesn't say, well, maybe you work on it, but if you don't, that's okay.

He says to walk worthy, it needs to be with humbleness and humility and with patience. And there's two words he uses after this.

[14:28] Two things that are to be a part of who we are. The first one says, forbearing one another. Forbearing one another.

Do you know what that means? Tolerance. Now you know I looked it up, right? Forbearing. It means to be patient.

We've already talked about that. And forgiving. And to hold oneself back with effort. Isn't that an interesting part of the definition?

To hold oneself back with effort. So this is saying that to be forbearing, sometimes it's going to take some effort. It isn't always something that just happens naturally.

It doesn't necessarily mean it's a part of our natural personality. We may have to put work into it. And it says to hold oneself back. What do you think that means?

[15:25] How are we to hold ourselves back? What is that talking about? Any ideas? Doug? Say what you mean, but don't say it mean.

Good advice. I heard another one. To be silent. Sometimes holding yourself back with effort just means to shut your mouth, doesn't it? And I'm not saying that in a mean way.

But I think there's sometimes God would look at us and say, just be quiet. Just zip it. But sometimes we have to work to do that, don't we? Somebody says something to us the wrong way, whether they intended that or not, what do we want to do?

What do we want to do? Ah! Ah! Right? We want to respond with equal whatever, don't we? Don't we?

Admit it. Forbearing one another means to hold ourselves back with effort. That means we may have to restrain ourselves. You know, sometimes you think of two people getting in a fight.

[16:36] And, you know, sometimes they'll have friends that do what? Hold them back, right? They grab their arms and the person's trying to get away to go fight whoever. However, we need to do that to ourselves.

It shouldn't take someone else doing that for us. We should, with effort, restrain ourselves. Even when we're upset. Most of all, when we're upset. When we feel like striking back or using words or whatever, forbearing means to hold oneself back with effort.

Whether it is our words and keeping quiet. Whether it is our actions and just waiting and praying about it before we respond. But folks, to walk worthy of this job that God has given us, being part of this family business.

Walking worthy means it's going to take effort. And sometimes just to hold ourselves back. But he doesn't end with forbearing. What does he say in the next verse? First word.

At least in the King James in verse 3, it starts with one word. Endeavoring. You want the definition for that one? Do you?

[17:41] Are you awake? Do you want the definition? Alright. Endeavoring means to attempt with effort. So again, effort is a part of all this.

This is not stuff that just happens naturally. To attempt with effort to keep unity. Endeavoring. To attempt with effort to keep unity.

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Again, effort is a part of it, isn't it? To keep unity within the family.

Within God's family. And here's the thing. That we need to understand. Unity does not automatically happen. Do we get that? Unity is not the natural state of things.

Do we understand that? Whenever you get groups of... Well, this is true for all things. And I'm not a scientist. I'm not a whatever.

[18:43] But I was reading a little bit about the laws of thermodynamics. Sounds like some light reading, doesn't it? But some things about the laws of thermodynamics is that when things are left to themselves, that they end up in chaos or entropy or disorder.

When things are left on their own, that's how they naturally end up. An easy example to understand that. Your house at home.

If you just leave it on its own and don't do anything, what happens? We'll talk about the inside of the house first.

You don't do anything. You just leave it on its own. What happens? Does it get better? You don't do anything for a week and it's like, oh, this is much better than when I started. What happens after a week if you leave it alone and don't put any effort into it?

It's a mess. It's dirty. Because you live in it. You come and go. You get dressed. You leave your shoes or socks around or whatever you do. You leave bowls out in the kitchen or whatever.

[19:54] Left on its own, it gets worse and worse, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Now let's talk about the outside of the house. Leave it alone.

Don't do anything. Ever. What happens? The grass grows. The weeds grow. Eventually with the house, and this may take longer, does the roof last forever?

Okay, so you just let it go and the leaks are going to naturally just stop leaking, right? Is that the way it works? What happens? It deteriorates.

The leaks get worse and it just eventually the house just crumbles. That is one of the laws of things. Left on their own, things don't organize themselves and get better.

They just disintegrate. Do you think that is true with unity? Yes. It is not the natural state of things.

[20:56] You put groups of people together. You put groups of people together. What is the natural reaction? Typically when you put groups of people together, what is the natural reaction? Everybody always gets along and it's rainbows and sunshine.

Is that how it works? What happens? Conflict? Anything else? Anything else? Arguments?

What's that? Different opinions? And what do all those result in? Chaos. They result in groups and cliques and this side and that side and this group disagrees with this group that disagrees with this group.

And it can be over all kinds of things. That is the natural state of groups of people. Do we understand that? That is why when we start talking about the word endeavoring, it means with effort.

Endeavoring to keep the unity. The unity does not happen automatically within God's church. It happens when we as people take this calling that God has given us seriously.

[22:01] When we take it and do it with humility. Unity, when we are patient with each other and forgiving of each other. And when we make an effort to make sure unity is there.

And that means sometimes restraining ourselves. It means sometimes going out of our way to fix relationships or misunderstandings. To not just let them go and let them fester.

Because again, if there is a misunderstanding and you just let it go, it's going to heal itself, right? Is that what usually happens? No. Folks, it breaks my heart sometimes, even within physical families.

Here is the thing. I have known physical families where there is a parent that hasn't spoken to their child in 25 years. I have known situations where there are siblings that haven't spoken in years.

Because of some disagreement over something that happened way back in the past. And here is the thing. Those don't naturally just fix themselves. It takes one person, at least one of them, being willing to bridge that gap and start to heal.

[23:10] It takes effort. And that is what God is telling us about this family that He has made us a part of. And this job that He has given us. Folks, it takes effort.

Forebearing. Forebearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. And here is what He reminds us of.

The next few verses. Because here is what the unity is all about. And there are seven things. Seven is a big number in the Bible, isn't it? There are seven things it mentions here that we all have in common.

For there is... How many bodies? One. How many spirits are there? One. How many lords? One. How many faith? One. How many baptisms? One. How many gods? One. One of all these. And here is the thing.

[24:12] There is only one of these that we can have an impact on. Look at the list again. Can you have an impact on the Spirit? The Spirit is the Spirit, isn't it? The Lord.

The faith. The baptism. God. We don't impact those. They are. You know what we do impact? The body. Because we are part of it.

We have an impact on the body. The body is what we make it. It is pleasing to God if we make it that way. Can the body be not pleasing to God? Yeah.

The only way it is pleasing to God is if we put the work into it and make it pleasing to God. And here is the thing. The reason I read the last two verses of this chapter.

There is a lot more in between and our time is getting away. But I want you to look at the last two verses of the chapter. In order again to make the body all it needs to be, we need to be endeavoring and forbearing.

[25:15] But there are some things we need to get rid of in our lives. There are some things we need to toss out. Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice.

It says to put these things away. When it comes to our interaction with each other, none of these words should be a part of it, should they? Right? Everybody say, right.

Okay. Making sure you're still with me. But verse 32 talks about what should be present in God's family. And be you kind one to another.

Tenderhearted. Forgiving one another. Folks, there is the recipe to God's family that we're a part of. Working the way that he wants it to. First of all, and it sounds like such a simple thing, doesn't it? Be kind to one another. Does that sound simple? Is it sometimes hard to do and practice?

[26:25] A simple thing like being kind to one another. And we should have a desire to be kind to each other. Understanding that we're family. Be kind. And here's the other one. The next thing it says. In order to be kind, this needs to be a part of us.

We need to be tenderhearted. Tenderhearted towards each other. That means caring about each other. Love is a big part of this chapter. Loving each other.

Being concerned about each other. Needs to be a part of who we are. Turn to somebody, not your physical family. Turn to somebody and say, I care about you.

Turn to somebody. I don't care if they're looking at you or not. Tap them on the shoulder and tell them.

Okay. It is great that you said that. Do you mean it? Are you going to live it? Tenderhearted.

[27:28] It means a desire to care about other people that are around us. Being kind. It means we care about their feelings. About their emotions. It's part of that. Esteeming them more highly than ourselves.

Putting their needs in front of our own. And that's hard. And finally, probably the most forgiving one. Because we will at times hurt other people. Whether it is intentional or not.

We are not perfect, are we? Okay. Those of you that are perfect, raise your hand. If you raised your hand, you are not perfect. Because you just told a lie. None of us are perfect.

There will be times we offend each other. There may have been a time I offended you. Because I am so far from perfect. I make mistakes. I sometimes say things and I think later, Oh, I should have said that differently.

I may have offended you. Do you know what you need to be ready to do to me? Look at the next thing. The last thing it mentions. Because I think it's the most important. Forgiving one another.

[28:32] We should have hearts that are just ready to forgive each other. That as soon as you offend me or do me wrong, I am just ready to forgive. That is my first response. To forgive. Because, you know, most of the time when forgiveness is mentioned in the Bible, It's tied to something.

It's not mentioned on its own. And here it's tied to something. Forgiving one another. But it says even. It's not done there. Even as what? Even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Here's the thing about forgiveness. We are always so ready to offer it to somebody else when they deserve it. Right? When they finally admit how wrong they are and how right I was.

Then I'm ready to forgive them. Right? When they've earned that forgiveness from us. Do we earn God's forgiveness?

Do we deserve God's forgiveness? And he says we're to forgive as God forgives us for Christ's sake.

[29:42] An unearned forgiveness. That's not reliant on the other person's goodness. But just that's what comes out of us. All these folks are things that God wants to see in what family?

This one. His family. And not just here. He's talking to all Christians. Our family is much bigger than these four walls. We've talked about that last week. This is how we walk worthy.

This is how we make the family what God wants it to be. It takes what? Effort. It, excuse me, it doesn't happen naturally. It takes effort.

Here's a question. Are you ready to put the effort in that God wants us to? To make the family what God wants it to be? Because I will tell you and I believe when we come together in God's name, is he here?

Do you believe that? Do you believe that there is a spiritual battle that's going on at all times? The Bible talks about that. Do you believe that there are angels that watch over us?

[30:50] That there's a spiritual realm that we can't see? Folks, that's what the Bible says. This wasn't really part of the sermon, but I hope we understand that. It says his angels are camped round about us.

That's what it says. They're watching over us. That means when we come together, do you know what's happening in the spiritual realm? There's a whole bunch of angels rejoicing because we're praising God. Is that pleasing to God?

Absolutely. But do you know the other thing that happens? Satan wants to destroy. We talked about that, right? Families. God, Satan wants to destroy families. It says he's a hungry lion roaming about seeking whom he may devour.

What do you think Satan wants to do with his family? Tear it apart. Destroy it. He's lying in wait.

That's what a lion does. A lion ambushes things, doesn't it? You can see it. You see a cat along the road. What's it doing? It's sneaking up on something. And when that something is least expecting it, boom.

[31:49] The cat's right there jumping on it. Do you think that's how Satan is? Do you think that's why God calls him a lion seeking whom he may devour? When we're not ready, when we're not looking for it, Satan is going to try to inject himself in and tear apart what God creates.

Folks, we need to be working with effort to make this family what God wants it to be. A place of love. A place of worship of God. A place when anybody who comes through these doors feels God's love.

And I am so grateful when new people come. One of the things that's often shared is, well, I came in and I just felt loved. That is how it's supposed to be. That is what is supposed to happen in God's family.

But it's not going to happen automatically. We need to continue to work at it. Let's be the family that God wants us to be. Let's walk worthy of this job that God has called us to. Let's love each other and keep the unity that God expects.

Let's pray. Lord God, I just thank you for this morning. I thank you for your word. I thank you for each person that's in this place. I thank you for the family that you've called together here in Arthur.

[33:00] I thank you for the visitors this morning. That, Lord, if they have Christ in their heart, they're just as part of the family. And, Lord, I just pray that if there's any in this place this morning that haven't accepted Jesus Christ, that they would make that decision this morning.

So that they, too, would be part of this wonderful family that you're creating. But, Lord, also remind us that making this family a loving family is going to take work on our part.

That we need to be, with effort, working at keeping the unity of being kind to each other and forgiving to each other so that this continues to be a place of love and forgiveness that you desire that it would be.

So, Lord, challenge us. Speak to our hearts. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning as we sing, the altar's open. Whatever your need is, if you have a need this morning, come and pray.

If you want me to pray with you, I would love to. If you just want to pray on your own, that's fine, too. But the altar's open this morning as we sing. Becky. I'd like to stand, take your hymn rolls, and turn to 426.

[34:05] 426. Blessed be the tide that binds. I want to thank you for being part of our family. And this morning as we pray, we're also going to pray for our meal that we have.

We've got plenty of hot dogs and hamburgers and good food to eat. We invite you and encourage you to stay. There's some bounce houses out there for the kids or cornhole. Just enjoy the day, spending it together as God's family.

So, let's bow our heads as we pray together. Lord God, we again thank you for your presence in this place. Because you are the one that binds us together. You are the one that has created this family that we get to be a part of.

And Lord, I just pray that on this day, you'd help us just to enjoy being part of this family. To share that love together, that unity together, and just share time and fellowship together. We pray that you'd bless the food that we're going to eat.

We just thank you for this wonderful day that you have given us. We give you all the praise for it. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ and all of God's family, Sid.

[35:08] Amen. God bless you. Enjoy the meal. You can eat outside, inside, wherever you'd like. And have a wonderful day.