

# Foundational Characteristics of Christian Unity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please have a seat and turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4 is where I will be preaching from.

Hey, I got a question for you guys. I know we're still kind of getting to know each other, but how many of you guys ever played team sports? Put your hand up. Put your hand up. Leave it up. All right. That's a fair amount. How many, you know, you might be a little bit depressed that didn't play a team sport, but maybe you had a work team. You ever have a work team? Right? Apparently, you guys are all individuals on the work except for Murray. All right. That's good. But a lot of times, you know, we function in these teams. Now, here's the second question. How many of your team experiences were good ones? Okay. A few last hands, right? Sometimes there's good team experiences and sometimes there's really bad team experiences.

[ 1 : 03 ] When I was younger, I pretty much played every sport just so I wouldn't have to go home after school, right? So, at the end of the season, it would start into volleyball, which would lead into basketball, which, believe it or not, would lead into badminton, if you can believe it.

And then I would kind of go into track and field. And basketball, I was horrible at. And badminton, I wasn't all that good at. But at the ends were my two favorite sports, track and in case you're wondering about baseball, baseball was my summer love, right?

That's my real love. But volleyball was kind of an interesting thing because when I finally got to be a senior to make the varsity team, I tried out and I actually made the starting team.

I was the last guy to make that six. So, there's six guys. I was the last guy on that six team. Now, just so you know, this is a perennial last place team, okay?

So, I'm the last starter to make the absolute last place team in a league of like 12 teams, okay? Not a very good player at that point, okay?

[ 2 : 11 ] Just, anyhow, we would play. And I can honestly tell you, it was a horrible experience. Backbiting, you know, I was so bad that the team was petitioning whether they could play with five players rather than six.

You know, they were, you know, now we see a lot of guys in the transgender trying to compete with the men. They were petitioning to let the women take my place on the team, right?

Like, I just wasn't very good. It was a horrible experience. I don't even think we finished last, but we didn't finish good.

But then, in my next year of high school, actually moved to the other side of town, and I went to another high school. So, sure enough, volleyball season shows up.

I'm the new guy trying out. The only problem with this, this team is a perennial powerhouse. They're either in the provincial finals or they're just missing pretty much every year. So, I'm, you know, I'm stupid, right?

[ 3 : 14 ] I just, you know, at that age, I'm going to tell you, you always think you're the greatest guy in the world at 16, right? Like, I'm the best athlete. They had me all wrong. So, I try out, and sure enough, I make the team.

But I'm not the last guy to start. I'm on the last guy to make that bench place. And the only reason I make the team is because the other guy I was playing against was Seventh Day Inventist, and who wasn't allowed to play on Saturdays.

So, they kind of had to let me play, right? But anyhow, that experience was a little bit different. It turned out it was a completely different culture. They were encouraging.

When we used to go on tournaments out of town, I was surprised the coach would have no curfew on us. There was no chaperones because he knew that these players took the games so seriously that we monitored ourselves.

The other team that I used to play for, going out of town was just going to be a complete wreck, right? They had to have chaperones on every other guy because every guy was just looking for an excuse to get out, have fun, probably drink or do some kind of challenge.

[ 4 : 22 ] Well, what was kind of interesting is I never made the starting lineup. I played that bench position as best as I could. All year long, I had a specific role. But it was just a completely different experience.

The team was pretty good. We actually got second in the provincials. And would you believe it, I was actually named to the all-star team just over that time.

And what really made me better over that time was I had a team that practiced. They stayed late. If they knew I was, I was so bad at the net, they used to call me tuna because I was always caught in the net, right?

And so they would help me with that. And whenever I would hit a ball, I could hit it really hard, but it was usually 10 to 15 bricks up on the wall, right? Hitting the ball on the ground was a big problem for me.

But they would work with me. And through the season, the team kind of gelled. And they were all different guys from different walks of life. And I started to really understand that unity, support and love and care for one another, makes a big difference on a team.

[ 5 : 31 ] What's interesting is that Paul, in this letter, is communicating these exact same things that I learned out of practice for the church.

That the church actually has an emphasis on unity. And if we are not unified, we are not building into one another, the breakdown of the church will happen.

In fact, as one author says, unity is not a quality of the church. It is the quality of the church. The fact of the matter is, Jesus Christ came to build his kingdom.

And for some reason, he uses us with all our failings, our foibles, and our follies to reach the world with his gospel.

That's amazing. We are imperfect people, yet a perfect God has chosen to use us. And here in this book of Ephesians, Paul, an apostle chosen by Jesus Christ, is here in this letter teaching the saints of Ephesus how a church should work.

[ 6 : 51 ] How it is to work. You can almost call it a blueprint for church life. And I don't know if you noticed that Carl read a prolonged section. And in that section, we're going to cover it in the next couple of months.

But right now, we're talking about the type of characters that believers are to have on the team. So it's almost like the skill sets that any player has to bring to the team.

So when I made the volleyball team, I could jump, right? That was a skill. I was able to hit a ball. I just wasn't very good at them. But there was kind of that raw potential.

And we all have that potential. God has given us some gifts. And then he's going to later talk about apostles. He's going to talk about evangelists. He's actually going to talk about elders, pastors who are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

So a good church not only has this raw material from the people, but also people who lead and who train and equip. So on my volleyball team, I had this coach who worked with me, who'd spend extra hours working on those skill sets, preparing me for game time.

[ 8 : 04 ] And the absolute goal that Paul has is to present us as mature adults, not children. Amen? He just doesn't want us floundering, tossing two on waves, not knowing what we believe or what we do.

But there's a course for our life and he wants us on it. And the last section we're going to deal with is the warning. How tempting it is to go back to the old life.

That's not something that he wants. So in reality, on any team, certain characteristics build up and certain characteristics tear down.

So this morning, I want to go over the four characteristics that build unity in the church. That's four characteristics that build unity in the church.

So that we would grow into maturity. That we would be the type of people that God uses to build his kingdoms with. That we would be blessed by.

[ 9 : 06 ] Now, you guys heard a lot of the first characteristics, right? Remember? Humility. In fact, if you weren't with us, I would encourage you to listen to the sermons. One is on board, but we actually did a two-part series on humility.

And it's evil doppelganger. Pride, right? Where there's humility, there's pride. Big issue. Not in some of our lives. It's a big issue in all of our lives.

And if you're sitting there saying, well, it's not an issue in my life, you didn't listen to those last sermons, I guarantee you. Because it shows up everywhere and we're not even aware of it. So the reality is that we need to understand is that you and I cannot please God without humility. You know that? It is absolutely impossible to please God without humility. In fact, humility is the one thing that God says he searches out for in God's people.

That's awesome. We're not left to guess. He actually tells us. I am looking for those who humble themselves.

[10:15] Who is the most humble person that ever lived? People, you'll answer Moses. Someone came after. Jesus, right?

Humbled himself to death on a cross. What's interesting is pride provokes disunity. Humility engenders unity. It's interesting.

I found this quote by this man named Epicurus. He was a first century BC Stoic Greek philosopher. And he left a list of some of the qualities you want to be and qualities you do not want to be. And guess what number one was? Humility. In his mind, that was the least wanted, desired characteristic that a human being could ever want. So I'm just going to read you just briefly our example that we have in Jesus Christ, which is found in Philippians 2, 5, 8.

It says, It's not enough that God just becomes a man, right?

[11:38] God could have come as a king. He could have been the world overlord. Any position. Wealth. Power.

A great general. But the Bible uses this word. He came as a servant. It's like a king to him would have been humble.

But not humble enough. Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

If you've never did any evangelism or outreach to people of Islam, this is what gums them up.

Because they cannot imagine a God who would allow his creation to kill him.

That just tells us of God's great humility. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

[12:46] So that the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen. The path to being glorified by God is humility.

Second characteristic I talked about last week was that the word gentleness, which can also be translated as meekness. It's actually what it does mean, meekness. But in our culture today, we tend to think of meekness as weak.

That's not the point. Meekness is called power under control. It's like a tamed animal. You can have a tamed racehorse who obeys your every command, who follows you when you have that bridle in his mouth.

But he is far more powerful than you. Is he not? That's him. He's a form of meekness. And again, we see this perfect modeling of this in Jesus Christ.

He's in the garden. Romans are coming to take him. He simply says, do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?

[13:56] That is 12 legions. I think there's 6,000 in every legion. That's a lot of angels with a lot of power.

And he had that, but he chose not to use it. Even in his humanity, Jesus had access to divine power, but he chose not to use it. And in fact, this is a characteristic of many of God's choice servants that are modeled.

Do you remember the story of David? He's in the cave. He's on the run. Saul wants to kill him. And he's actually got multiple opportunities to kill Saul. But he doesn't.

He steps back. Even Moses, when he was before Pharaoh doing these miracles, he actually had the power. He could have unleashed more power, but he continued to show grace to him.

It's God's time, not my time. The contrast to gentleness would be callous, cruel, mean, severe.

[15:04] So the first two characteristics that Jesus Christ has for the church is he wants to see humility and he wants to see gentleness. So today we're going to talk about the next two.

So the third one is with patience. Humility and gentleness with patience. I would submit to you that we sometimes don't really get patience.

We think of patience as, you know what, I missed the train. I can wait another three hours to catch that train again, right? So I'll just do something with my time waiting for that to happen.

But the reference point that Paul's talking about is church. So because it's part of the church, he's talking about reference point to people. So it would be used in this example.

It's when you're at the train station waiting to pick up someone that you love or not love. And guess what? They didn't make it. So you have got to wait three hours at the station waiting for them to catch the right train.

[16:18] Do you understand? The patience is due to someone else. It has nothing to do with you. So that's the type of patience.

It is associated with the term long-suffering. It means to demonstrate self-restraint before acting.

It's the quality of a person who is able to avenge themselves yet refrains from doing so. Okay, you guys actually get to see the perfect example of this here in this church.

You know who? My wife. All right? I can talk about my wife today. She's not here. And none of you guys. But before I got married, I was single for 46 years.

Okay? Just think of all the bad habits I collected in 46 years, right? Like, you know how I used to deal with dishes? I used to just let them stack up and I had to call mom and ask her to come visit.

[17:28] You know? That's not true. I paid her. Okay? But there was just certain things you could just let go, not do.

My wife, having raised two kids very well, coming into my home, things were going to change. And my wife has been extremely gracious with me over some of my bad habits that I'm working very hard to break.

Like, I now put the dishes in the sink rather than on the counter, right? No. No, I'm just kidding. But those are just some of the things that she does for me.

She just shows patience. She doesn't get mad. She could get back. I could come home and she said, I'm not doing dinner. Or she could just leave all her stuff around and say, I'm not taking care of that. No, my wife loves me.

She cares for me. Sometimes she sends a subtle message. Like, all my clothes unfolded on my side of the bed, you know? If you want to sleep here, you got to do them.

[18:34] But that is what we do for one another that we love someone, right? We just show this level of patience. This is how great the quality of patience is.

Romans 3, 4, Paul writes, Do you not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

That God's patience with us, God's kindness with us, his forbearance with us, which is what we're going to be talking about the next quality, actually leads people to Christ.

It leads people to seek out, what is that deeper motivation that gives you such a supernatural love for me? Galatians 5, 22 tells us that patience is a fruit of the Spirit.

Paul asks Timothy to model it for him. He says, As a pastor, I am commanded to preach the word.

[19:52] Be ready at in-season and out-of-season. I'm supposed to reprove, rebuke, exhort. And how? With complete patience and teaching.

So I'm to extol this idea of patience when we teach. Want to be patient? This is what I used to think.

When you few want to be patient, think of those people who've been patient with us, right?

Whether it's our parents, our wives, a co-worker, a mentor, our siblings, friends. And it was sometimes a time in our life that we just weren't getting anything.

I can point to my volleyball instructor. My coach would stay after practice just to work on my passing. He'd spend a whole extra hour knowing, All right, this is a weak part.

We're going to get you up to speed. And he'd do that several times a week. I look at some of my mentors from seminary. Men who were patient with my impatient disposition.

[20:58] If you're here and you have no friends, It could be because you are not patient. At seminary, they banged in this verse.

And it's 1 Thessalonians 5 tune. It's an interesting verse. It says, And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idol. And it's instructive. And admonish the idol means someone who knows everything that he's supposed to be doing, not doing it, give him a kick in the bum.

That's what he's saying. You can admonish the idol. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. Even that guy you want to give a swift kick to, you want to get them going, continue to be patient with them.

Fact is, we endure with one another. There's going to be people who will test our patient limitations. Sometimes people remind us of people who've hurt us.

Others remind us of us, right? We tend to be more impatient with the people that are sometimes like us because they are picking up on our bad habits.

[ 22 : 16 ] Think about how patient God is with you. Think about it. Think about it. Think about it. Usually you feel kind of embarrassed.

But the fact is, God is for us. He's patient. And he desires us to demonstrate that same quality and characteristic in our lives.

Which brings over to the fourth characteristic, if we notice. It says, bearing with one another in love. Now, this is closely related to patience, which means to endure something unpleasant or difficult, whether on one's own behalf or on behalf of someone else.

Another way is to say to be patient and endure through someone's errors or weaknesses. Here's an example. It's when you're at the train station again, waiting to pick someone up and they miss the train now, you are there waiting for them for three hours.

And it's the fifth time this week. Right? A little bit more frustrated. Funny thing, bearing is a funny thing.

[ 23 : 37 ] Because sometimes we think of it, we are doing it for God, but on the outside we're saying something else. Right? I'm bearing it.

It's the fifth time they're late. But I'm doing it for God. I'm serving that coffee again. But here's the way.

Do you know why people, how do you know you look like a bear when you're serving? Because people keep asking you, are you sure you want to do this? Are you sure you really want to help me? Are you really, is it okay if I borrow your lawnmower? I'm sorry. It's like, you know, you just feel like some people, yeah, sure, whatever. Go ahead, take it. But some people, you just, you feel like you're taking the most precious thing that they have.

It's just a pot. I will return it tomorrow. But there's just that, if you get that response a lot, and you're sitting there, I'm doing it for you, Jesus.

[ 24 : 46 ] I'm doing it for you. Yeah, you're more bear, than like Jesus in that moment, right? You say with your mouth one thing, but your body language is saying, no, I am not fine with this.

Well, how do we know when we're not doing it well? Well, we make side remarks, veiled insult, sarcasm. We hide it with humor.

The visual view of bearing one another is to hold up, like holding up a bridge. The reality is people are immature.

People are sinful, silly, impatience. And we all get that feeling. We ask for something or we need help. Man, I need to move.

If I ask that guy, I'm going to have to move him 10 times, right? It's like there's these strings attached. Now, why are these responses wrong?

[ 25 : 56 ] Is that okay? Am I not doing the right thing? Isn't that God working in me to serve even when I'm angry? Well, no, because look at the qualifying word that's used there.

Bear one another in love, right? Bear one another in love, right? That changes everything.

Love is the motivator. Now, this is the word agape, love, which is the love that you're not in it for you.

You're actually in it for them. You're serving them, giving them, whether it's your time or a physical thing, because you know it's good for them.

It's loving for them. It's an attitude of love in tolerating the faults, the quirks, the personality traits of others.

[ 26 : 57 ] 1 Peter 4, 8 says, love covers up a multitude of sins. See, often we don't love in this way because we want something to be best for us.

But God commands us to love in a way that's best for them. It is a continual love, an unconditional love.

Just this past weekend, speaking with a friend who is dealing with, she's a little bit older, but she's got a father who's got Alzheimer's, and she was just sharing, it is her worst time going to see her

dad.

And she just says he just doesn't appreciate it. But that's not why she's doing that, right? She's not serving her dad. He doesn't even remember who she is anymore. You know, and she commented, when I go to serve someone else, they at least love me.

Makes me feel special. That's when we need to take that step back, right? I'm doing it unto you, O Lord. I know it's tough.

[ 28 : 08 ] It's frustrating. I think a lot of times we do have to pray and call on the Lord to help us with our mind and our heart. Because it is hard.

Some of you know there's many families in our little church that are dealing with parents that are beginning to lose their minds with dementia and Alzheimer's. It's a horrible disease.

And to go over and love someone who doesn't know you anymore, I know my heart would hurt at that. But God promises to give us the grace to do these things, to serve one another.

So, we are called to be humble people. We are called to be gentle people. We are called to be patient people. And we are called to be loving people.

Why is he doing this? Now, notice in verse 3, there's a couple of key words here. First word, it says, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

[ 29 : 16 ] Huge command here, all right? That word eager, intense desire, keen interest. You need to make every effort. So, this has to be a primary priority for you.

Now, get this. It says, to maintain the unity. It doesn't say you make the unity, but you maintain the unity. Why is there a distinction between the two?

First, our unity is caused by the blood of Christ. Amen? That is why we are bound together. It's because of Christ's work on the cross for us.

If it was up to us to make the unity, all right, everybody who has a dog can be a part of it, right? We could do whatever we want. We would lower the standard to anything that we thought would make people feel welcome.

Well, you don't really need Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, but are you Jesus positive? That's what's going on in a lot of churches today. They want this idea of unity.

[ 30 : 21 ] They don't want to stick to what the Bible says. So, instead of like, man, this is just a really weighty book, let's just take some things out of there. The more things we take out, the more people will come in, and won't God be happy?

It's not what he's saying here. The unity has already been made by the blood of Jesus Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit to appropriate that work in our lives.

Because of that work, we are now in union with Jesus. And because we're in union with Jesus, we are in union with one another. Unity has been made.

Now, we need to work to keep it. How do we keep it? Well, we do things by being humble, being gentle, being patient, bearing one another.

Now, when Paul uses that word eager to maintain, why does he say that? Why do you have to put so much effort to maintain unity? Paul's telling us something.

[ 31 : 30 ] It's not easy. Unity is not a simple thing. It's not an easy thing. It's not a natural thing. It's not a natural, normal thing to put a whole bunch of people together and say, hey, be united.

It needs to be constantly on our minds. And it constantly needs to be a part of our actions. And if you remember from last time's sermon, the goal that Paul is calling to us is to walk in a manner worthy of God.

It's to walk in a manner worthy of God is to maintain the unity of peace that belongs within us. It's the peace that God's saying, hey, I made that unity for you.

And you're to maintain that humble, gentle, patience, bearing one another. If you guys can submit yourselves to that, you will be drawn together.

In fact, unity takes our full dedication. It means loving people in this church selflessly and without reason, other than they are children of God.

[ 32 : 53 ] Did you know in John 17, it's called the high priestly prayer. This is the prayer, Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.

He's going to be crucified from that place. He's actually going to be dragged out of that garden in shackles by a cohort of Roman soldiers.

His last sermon isn't, or last sermon, his last prayer isn't, God strike them all dead. We know he asked, Lord, if it's possible, take this cup of wrath from me.

But he also prays for us. Check out verse 11. He says, I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I am coming to you, Holy Father.

I'm going there to you, Lord. Keep them in my name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

[ 33 : 55 ] So this idea of the Trinity is how we are supposed to be operating. Then he continues in verse 20. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

So he's saying, I'm not just asking this of the apostles, but as the apostles go out and are beating to me and spread the gospel, I want that unity for them too.

And he says, that they may be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us so the world may believe that you have sent me.

That's huge, guys. Our unity is what preaches to the world. The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and love them, even as you love me.

So when Paul preaches later in Romans 15, he says, we who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

[ 35 : 21 ] We're to take that seriously. Philippians 1, 27, let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

My friends, if our center is self, if our center is feelings, if our center is prestige, if the center of my soul is caring for my rights and chief concerns, there will never be unity.

No, he uses that word, the bond of peace, bond as in we're all tied together with these belts. What breaks unity?

Well, anger, wrath, malice, slander, gossip, obscene talk. Those are the things that break unity. Reality is God has formed a church. It is a unified body, a body that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and God takes unity seriously. Seriously.

[ 36 : 42 ] Matthew 5 writes, if you have an offering, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift. You know how we usually get around this? I know I'm not fixing that relationship, but I'm going to do something extra this week, right?

I'm going to donate another week to camp. I'm going to put an extra \$10,000 into my giving this month. We think we're negotiating with God that I'm going to do something that I know God thinks is pretty positive to offset this unity thing.

But what did God pray for? Did God pray for, I hope that all the camp work goes great, or that the church's coffers are forever filled?

God wasn't worrying about that before he was crucified. Jesus Christ was worried about our unity, and he was praying for it. You see, God's calling is not a private calling to a personal, private relationship with God.

[ 38 : 02 ] God's calling is a personal relationship to a personal body of believers. We are called together at one. The community is where the witness is.

The community is where the power is. Now, if you take a notice in verse four, Paul then states there's seven ones, and we're going to go over these really briefly. But you'll notice verse four, five, and six are separated one spirit, one Lord, one God.

So there we have the Trinity once again being exemplified. He says there's one body and one spirit. What he means by one body is there's only one body of believers, right?

It's called the universal church. It's the church before time, after time, in every country of the world. It's one. And how do you get in? Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What's the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

It's the moment that you were saved, you confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and he enters into your heart. The Spirit has now sealed you, according to earlier Ephesians chapter two, and you are now God's.

[ 39 : 04 ] That's how it happens. And then you were called to one hope. And that hope is the realization of God's kingdom. Then you have this one faith and one baptism.

Now, a lot of people struggle with what is that one baptism? What is Paul talking about? Now, remember when he's talking about one Lord.

This is going on in Ephesus. It's Asia Minor, and there's the temple of Artemis or Diana, and there's monuments to all these gods all around.

What he's saying is actually, no, there's only one God, right? Rome was you can have any God, but you got to bow down to our God, right? A lot of countries were excited.

The more gods you had, the more power you would have. Paul's saying, no, no, there's one Lord, and there's only one faith.

[ 40 : 12 ] Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's it. But he uses this word one, baptism. So a lot of people struggle with what it is. If you read a Baptist commentary, guess what they're going to tell you?

They're going to tell you it's water baptism. That's just the way they work on that, right? We want to encourage you. The one baptism is water baptism. That's not the work that Jesus did that he's talking about. Now, if you read a commentary that supports infant baptism, they're going to talk about the baptism of the spirit that happens at salvation that I just previously talked about.

But that baptism, if it were so, would have been talked about under the work of the spirit rather than under the work of the Lord. I believe that baptism that it's talking about there is the baptism that is represented in Romans 6.

And I'll read that to you. Do you not know that all who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? The baptism is what happens is we're now union with Jesus.

Amen? We're now bond. We were therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.

[ 41 : 30 ] So that's what I think he's talking about there. I'm not going to write a book on that, okay? And then he says, one God, one Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

When Paul says all there, he's actually not talking about the world. He's actually talking about the saints.

That's who this letter is written to. God is God of all, but he's not Father of all. God is only Father to those who have placed their personal faith in Jesus Christ to.

That is the moment and the only moment that one becomes, he becomes our Father. In fact, we know in Scripture that Jesus Christ, as it said, you are of the Father, the devil.

They were created by God, but they did not worship God. God is certainly God of all and over all, but he's saying because of this unity, we all have this same Father.

[ 42 : 47 ] Galatians 4, 6 is because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father.

He's communicating a real relationship that we have with God. Colossians 1, 12 says, given thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

My friends, if you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, God is your Father. And you are bound to this community of believers who are also united with Jesus.

It is the Spirit who has opened your eyes and branded you as his. This community incorporates people from all times and all places, but it's also here in Squamish that God wants his reflection here in Squamish just as well as any other part of the world.

And the command to maintain the unity is for us just as it is any other church in the world.

[ 44 : 20 ] But he wants us to maintain it. He's not asking us to make us feel unified. He wants us to maintain the unity which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And we maintain it by following the commands that God has given to us through the Apostle Paul that we read here in Ephesians 4.

Are you humble? Is this something that you actually work to accomplish in your life? Are you known as a gentle person?

Or do you have a tongue that is more prone to cut rather than encourage? Are you patient with the sins and the foibles of others?

Can you wait on them to change? Can you encourage them? And fourthly, do you have an ability to bear with one another the really tough cases and do it in absolute love.

[ 45 : 43 ] If we're able to get those four things going, we're going to have a pretty fantastic church. Amen? This is a church, that's a community that people want to be a part of. Who doesn't want someone to be patient with them?

Now, what happens is when someone's patient, they can also be vulnerable, right? It means I can share with you my brokenness where I'm struggling and I know you are going to walk with me, disciple me, so I can grow to the maturity of adults.

That's what he's calling here for. So I don't know your stories where you're at, but my encouragement to you is you need to obey God on this because these are commands.

They're not suggestions. These aren't like 10 ideas that can work for you because they work for me. No, these are the things that Paul, as he lays out this blueprint, are setting down as necessities for the church of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, I know we...