

INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Ephesians chapter 4.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Ephesians 4,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Ephesians 4 on page **977**.

INTRODUCTION: SPIRITUAL MUTT

As you turn there,

- I didn't grow up going to church.
- I got saved at age 16.

And I'm pretty curious by nature,

- So, for a few years,
- I went from church to church...
- movement to movement...
- picking up a little here and a little there.

So, I'm kinda like a spiritual mutt...anyone feeling me on this?

- And the thing about mutts
 - is that they can be very resilient,
 - and actually can be a sturdier dog
 - over the long-haul
 - because they tend to avoid genetic diseases
 - that purebred dogs are more susceptible to.

- But the thing about mutts
 - is that they can be kinda freaky and weird, as well.
 - Right?
- So, it's like I have a little bit of Labrador,
- but maybe some Collie,
- and then some Pit Bull.
 - So, I'll go for a walk,
 - play fetch,
 - save little Timmy from a well,
 - and then bite you in the face. Alright?

Well, that's kinda how my early spiritual development went.

- I went from the Catholics,
- to the Methodists,
- to the Baptists,
- to the Pentecostals,
- to those 'non-denominational' denominations.

And it's strange how many things DIVIDED each group from one another.

CATHOLIC

So, I was baptized as an infant in the Catholic Church.

And the Catholics have a process...

- which starts with infant baptism...
- and then a whole bunch of other stuff I didn't get to...

BAPTIZED

But then I got saved in High School, and a pastor asked me,

- *“So, have you been baptized?”*
- And I’m like,
 - *“Yeah, I was baptized in Catholic Church.”*
- *“Oh no! You gotta be baptized as a believer.”*
 - So, I got believer baptized.
- Which is what we practice here at Fathom.

CHARISMATIC

And then, a couple years later,

- I was a youth ministry intern,
- and we had some of the kids from our youth group
- go to a charismatic church down the street.

And they came back

- and said that people there asked them
- *“have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?”*

And our students were understandably confused. But they continued,

- *“Well, have you spoken in tongues?”*
- *Cause that’s how you know you’ve had*
- *the baptism in the Holy Spirit.”*

And they proceeded to surround these 13, 14, 15-year-old girls and pray over them in tongues, to try to get THEM to speak in tongues.

This was another DIVISION,

COLLEGE

And then in college I just ping-ponged all around:

- The United Methodists,
- and the Free Methodists,
- and then the Baptists (Southern, General, and Conservative).
- I tried Community Churches,
- Calvary Chapels,
- Bible Churches.

I mean I was everywhere.

TRANSITION

But what I've found is that

- every church,
- every tradition,
- has lots of things that can DIVIDE them
- from other Christian denominations and churches.

And listen,

- I think it's good and right
- to go to a church
- that has stances on these things.

But today, I want us to focus on what UNITES us, not what DIVIDES us.

As Paul moves into the second half of Ephesians,

- he moves to the BEHAVIORS of the Christians in the church.
- And he begins by talking about how we behave with each other.

So, I'm calling today's sermon: **SLIDE UNITED**

Because in our text today, Paul's going to urge the church to be UNITED.

So, let's get into it. Ephesians chapter 4 starting in verse 1.

EPHESIANS 4:1

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

EXPLAIN

So, there you go.

- Paul is moving from BELIEF to BEHAVIOR.
 - For three chapters he's talked about BELIEF.
 - and he's now urging us how to walk...
 - how to BEHAVE...
 - and he uses the word *worthy*.
 - Live...walk...behave in a *worthy* manner.

Gosh, that is a huge statement! Just walk worthily!

- Well, how in the world are we going to do this?
- What's that gonna look like?

Well, Paul's going to list some things...

- that we are going to need to grow in...
 - if we want to walk in a worthy manner...
 - if we are going to be UNITED...

These are the areas we need to grow in to pursue that unity.

So, here's the list. Look at verse 2:

EPHESIANS 4:2

[2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

POINT: HUMILITY

Alright, this gets insanely practical! So, let's break those down a bit.

Number 1: **SLIDE HUMILITY**

In order to be UNITED, we're going to need to walk in all HUMILITY.

Now, humility is kinda a tricky thing.

- Cause, can you know that you're humble?
- Like, if you know you're humble,
 - are you actually humble?
- So, if you say,
 - *"Yeah, I feel like God has really been growing me significantly in the area of humility..."*
 - *and I'm just becoming WAY more humble!"*
- Are you?
 - Like, did you just brag about being humble?
 - Are you being arrogant...about being humble?

Like, I'm not sure you can even know if you're humble.

And the opposite of humility is pride, and that's tricky as well.

- Because no one who's prideful thinks they're prideful!
- They just think they're awesome!

- *“I’m not prideful,*
- *I just think I do things better*
- *than most other people!”*

See, this is tricky.

EXPLAIN: HUMILITY

Now, the Bible says to “Humble yourself.”

It also says we can “be humbled.”

- so, that means that humility is an action,
- not a feeling.

The idea of humility means to be brought low...

- but that doesn’t mean: to have low self-esteem.
- It means to have a RIGHT estimation of oneself next to God.

So, you may have heard the saying:

- humility is not THINKING LESS of yourself...
- humility is thinking of yourself LESS.

You see, sometimes Christians mistakenly think

- that humility means having a lack of confidence or conviction.
 - Like, *“I don’t want to come across prideful...*
 - *So, I’ll just be quiet...*
 - *and I won’t ever stand up*
 - *for what I believe in*
 - *cause I don’t want people to think I’m prideful.”*

- But that's not being humble.
 - Being humble isn't being wishy-washy
 - about yourself or your beliefs.

It's not THINKING LESS of yourself.

It's thinking of yourself LESS.

- It's being sober minded about yourself.
- It's knowing what Paul has already said in this book:
 - That we were dead...
 - And by grace alone...
 - He made us alive...
 - So, we can't boast one bit in ourselves!

TRANSITION

This is how Paul says we pursue being UNITED in the church. Why?

- Because there is nothing more divisive than arrogant people.
 - There is nothing quite so divisive
 - than men and women who think...
 - they are who they are...
 - and they have what they have...
 - and they've overcome what they've overcome...
 - because of themselves...in their own strength.

This is why the belief precedes behavior piece is, again, so important.

If we really BELIEVE who we are in Christ, we will walk in HUMILITY.

POINT: GENTLENESS

Second thing. We walk in **SLIDE GENTLENESS**

Now, gentleness pairs with humility.

- HUMILITY is my inward essence...
- Whereas GENTLENESS is its outward expression.

In other words, GENTLENESS is what HUMILITY looks like in public.

Now, a parallel passage is in Galatians 6:1

SLIDE GALATIANS 6:1

[1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

So, this is the instruction for how to handle, within the church, someone who is caught in sin.

Now, notice the language: it says, **restore him**.

- The word here for *restore* has the image of someone
 - who has a dislocated bone,
 - and a friend comes to them
 - and puts it back into place.
- You even dislocate a bone? It's incredible painful!
- Well, this person is caught in some serious sin,
 - and it is affecting them...
 - they are dislocated...
 - they need help.

But, HOW do we restore? With **a spirit of gentleness**.

- We move toward them,
 - in empathy and compassion,
 - in gentleness...
 - humility lived out...
 - knowing that they are made
 - out of the same stuff as we are.

EXPLAIN: OPPOSITE

So, **SLIDE GENTLENESS**

- pairs with HUMILITY...
- as the way we are to walk.

But, again, the opposite can occur and shatter a church's unity.

- It's where someone assumes
 - that their goodness
 - is something they've achieved,
- so, they feel conceited and proud when they see other's sin.
 - *"I can't believe you!*
 - *How could you do that thing?*
 - *You should know better than that!*
 - *Why don't you get over that thing?"*
- And we provoke.

No, we walk in HUMILITY and GENTLENESS so that we might flourish.

POINT: PATIENCE

Number three: we walk with **SLIDE PATIENCE**

Now, culturally, we are not built and bred for patience.

- We live in the least patient,
 - non-resilient culture
- in the history of mankind.

ILLUSTRATION: CHICK-FIL-A

I'll prove it:

- How many times have you gone to the Chic-Fil-A drive thru,
- only to find like 6000 other cars waiting in line...
 - then you look inside the Chic-Fil-A,
 - and there's like two people in the building.

So, moment of truth: do you go in, or stay in the drive-thru?

Here's what goes on in my head:

- "I don't want to have to walk..."
 - *I don't want to have to pull into a parking spot.*
 - *Get out of my air-conditioned truck.*
 - *Walk into that joint.*
 - *Actually talk to a person face-to-face.*
 - *Wait a shortened amount of time for my food.*
 - *And then carry my own bag back out to my truck*
 - *to eat my sanctified chicken.*
- *That'd be crazy!"*

Y'all, that's us. All the time!

PATIENCE IN CHURCH

And our lack of patience creeps into our churches as well.

We are often impatient with the immaturity of others. Right?

But I say this all the time: Growth is slower than anyone wants it to be.

- Growing and transforming into the image of Jesus Christ
- is slower than anyone wants it to be.

Now occasionally you'll hear some dude's testimony,

- and he had some radical thing happen,
- and the Holy Spirit just blew him up in prison or whatever,
- and he went cold turkey on all his vices...
- and he literally started a speaking tour ministry...
- and seems to just be fluttering through life now.

But, I'm just telling you, that's not how it works!

- Most of our testimonies are:
 - a day in and day out obedience
 - that, over time, transforms us.

So, we need to be patient.

- Christians often find themselves impatient
- with believers who aren't where they're at yet.
 - Why don't they just grow up?
 - Why don't they just stop doing that thing?
 - Why don't they give more?
 - Why don't they serve more?
 - Why don't they just make better decisions?

But if we want to be UNITED we must walk patiently with one-another.

- You know why I am going to be patient with you?
- Because I want you to be patient with me!
 - You're gonna need to be patient with me as your pastor,
 - cause I'm gonna let you down...
 - just like you're gonna let me down.

We need PATIENCE with one another.

POINT: BEAR WITH

The fourth one is to **SLIDE BEAR WITH** one another.

Now, let me try to explain what it means to bear with one another.

- There is within the larger church of Jesus Christ,
- a number of secondary or tertiary issues
- that distract and divide.

I covered some of them in my intro, but let me list a few of them:

- Predestination vs. free will.
- End times theology.
- Worship styles.
- Which version of the Bible to use.

ILLUSTRATION: BIBLES

Like, I saw a YouTube video of a really fundamentalist Baptist church,

- and a guy stood up and said,
 - *"This is an NIV Bible!*
 - *And some people think you can get saved with the NIV.*
 - *Well, here's what I think!"*

- And he ripped it up and threw it into the congregation.

Now, if I'm in the room, I'm looking for the exit! Right?!? This is coo-cool!

- But he did that with the ESV
- and the NLT
- and The Message.

And he's just ripping them up,

- because it was King James
- or nothing for this church.

And listen, y'all, that's scary!

EXPLAIN: ESSENTIALS

But honestly, I have been a Christian for more than 20 years,

- and I have watched TONS people...
 - myself included!
- get one segment of thought or theology
- and taken it and said,
 - *"If you don't believe this...you're out!*
 - *If you don't believe this about Spiritual Gifts,*
 - *or this about The Lord's Supper,*
 - *or this about women in ministry...*
 - *then we can't fellowship together!"*

Now, there are some things that are ESSENTIALS of the faith!

- They're ESSENTIAL!
- They're not up for debate!
 - The deity of Jesus Christ.
 - The sinfulness of humanity.
 - The authority of the Bible.
- That's just a few, but I would say the historical creeds,
 - the Apostles Creed
 - or the Nicene Creed,
- are the most concise place to find those things.

So, there are those things.

- But in other points of theology,
- We need to BEAR WITH one another!

Augustine put it like this:

- In Essentials Unity,
- In Non-Essentials Liberty,
- In All Things Charity.

There are members of this church who don't agree with me.

There are staff members who don't line up point for point.

Goodness, we even have secondary objections with one another in the elder room.

That's why verse 3 says this:

EPHESIANS 4:3

[3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

EXPLAIN

Y'all, it says eager to maintain UNITY!

Now, again, it's a common misconception but:

- UNITY is not UNIFORMITY
 - We pursue UNITY...being UNITED to one another.
 - But we don't have to be UNIFORM.
- It's just like ONENESS is not SAMENESS.

ILLUSTRATION: ONENESS

For those of us who are married,

- we realize that we married a very different person.
- And yet we are called to be "one"

But we're different...

We have different theologies on...

- How to load the dishwasher...
 - On
- How well done our steaks should be cooked...
 - On
- How to properly squeeze toothpaste out of the tube...
 - One does it incorrectly, squeezing the center...
 - One does it correctly, from the bottom of the tube.

We are incredibly different people...

- And the goal of marriage is not UNIFORMITY.
- It's not to get my spouse to be cloned into my image.

The goal of marriage is not SAMENESS...but it is ONENESS.

TRANSITION

And this is Paul's point here.

We are to pursue being **SLIDE UNITED**

- By walking in HUMILITY,
- with GENTLENESS,
- with PATIENCE,
- and BEARING WITH one another.

Walking in those will make us **eager to maintain unity.**

Now, in the next three verses Paul is going to show us WHAT we must be UNITED around.

Look at verses 4-6:

EPHESIANS 4:4-6

[4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

POINT: UNITED IN CHRIST

Now, listen, this is Paul saying,

- *“You know why I just listed all those things...*
- *you know why I urge you to walk in a worthy manner...*
- *you know why it takes all these things to walk UNITED?*
- *Because we are UNITED around ONE thing.”*

We are **SLIDE** UNITED IN CHRIST

He’s saying, *“There is really only ONE church!”*

Anybody want to make a guess as to how many different churches there are in the Denver/Metro area?

- Anyone?
- There are about 596,127 churches!

I’m exaggerating, but there are a lot of churches!

But Paul is saying there is actually only ONE!

- Now, we have chosen to worship with different styles,
 - and different secondary stances...
- but there we are UNITED IN CHRIST.

And that one body is made up of those who worship Jesus Christ at

- Mission Hills,
 - and Red Rocks.
- At Foothills Fellowship,
 - and Calvary Church.
- At First United Methodist
 - and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran.

Those are all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, we walk in HUMILITY and GENTLENESS and PATIENCE,
BEARING WITH one another...

- lest we start to think that we're the right ones...
- and we're the best ones...
- and we're the only ones.

Be careful!

- Be careful how you talk about other churches...
- Be careful how you judge other Christians...
- Because we are ONE...
- You might be judging YOU in this!

You see, our horizontal relationships with one another...

- our UNITY with one another...

Is directly connected to our vertical relationship to God...

- our UNITY with Christ.

CONCLUSION **UNITED SLIDE WITH PADS**

Church, when Paul moves

- from addressing BELIEF
- to addressing BEHAVIOR,
- he starts with the church being UNITED.

How we walk with one another IS how we walk in a worthy manner.

This is why it's so tragic to hear about people leaving churches

- because they don't like the song selection...
- or a certain staff member...
- or the carpet isn't the right color...
- or there's a newer, cooler church opening up down the street.

Goodness, there are so many things we can be DIVIDED over,

- and it is tragic that Christians
- are often known more for what they are DIVIDED over
- rather than what we are UNIFIED over.

ILLUSTRATION: RUN

So, let me end with this illustration I heard this week.

I heard about a guy who,

- as a freshman in college,
- went to pledge for a fraternity.

Now, there were all kinds of initiation rituals,

- most of which are inappropriate for us to discuss in church.
- but there was one that struck me as powerful.

They gathered all the guys pledging and brought them into a gymnasium.

- And they were going to have a race.
 - The pledges were supposed to race each other..
 - to figure out who's fastest...
 - by sprinting line to line in the gym.

And the guys in the frat said, *"There's only one way to win!"*

- You see, whoever finished first...
 - would get to sit out for the next race and rest...
 - while everyone else lined up and ran again...
- and then whoever finished the next race first...
 - would take the resting guy's place...
 - and then he would get back into the race.

Well,

- these are 18-year-old dudes...
 - so, there's a lot of testosterone...
 - and there's a lot of competition...
- They're trying to win!
- They want to be known as the fastest!

But the older guys say it again, *"There's only one way to win!"*

- So, they take off running.
- And after the first race, the fastest guy gets a rest.
- And after the second race, they swap.
- And they're running race after race after race.

But while they're running, all the older frat members start chanting:

- *"There's only one way to win!"*
- *There's only one way to win!*
- *There's only one way to win!"*

And 18-year-old guys aren't the smartest creatures...

trust me...I used to be one!

- So, race after race...
 - these guys are certain
 - that the only way to win
 - was to be the fastest,
 - catch your breath enough,
 - to run another race,
 - and outlast the other guys.

But finally, after many laps, one of the guys running figured it out.

The fraternity was trying to teach these pledges a lesson.

You see, there's only one way to win.

- And by focusing on being the fastest...
- And beating out everyone else...
- And the pride...
- And the ego...
- Was only a short-term win...
- It would never sustain...

You see, the lesson was actually:

- the one and only way to win the race,
- was to finish together.

The fraternity UNITED was more important than any one guy.

That was the lesson!

ENDING

Church, I want you to hear this today as we close:

- There's only one way to win this race, as a church.
- And the way that we win this race is together!
- It's by being UNITED.

Gosh, it's so much easier to be a critic...

- than one who pursues gentleness.

Gosh, it's so much easier to point out flaws...

- than to patiently endure.

Gosh, it's so much easier to divide...

- than it is to be united.

So, church, this is God's word for us today.

Be UNITED

- in ONE body,
- One Spirit,
- One hope.
- One Lord.
- One faith.
- One baptism.
- One God and Father of all.

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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