

We Are Easton

Four Values to Shape Our Church Culture

Grow Together

Series Overview

In this series, we're looking at the four key values that shape who we are, and who we aspire to be, as a church. At Easton, we aim to (1) love God & others, (2) grow together, (3) serve one another, and (4) share our lives with others.

Sermon Introduction

Growth doesn't happen without good stress. Muscles require stress to grow stronger. Your mind needs stress—the right kind—to grow more proficient, whether learning a new language, math, or reading comprehension. And if you want to grow as a person, nothing works quite so well as other people.

Talk about stressful.

Passage: Galatians 5:13-26 (NIV)

Gal. 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Gal. 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal. 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Gal. 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Gal. 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Gal. 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal. 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal. 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal. 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal. 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Gal. 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gal. 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage. What stood out to you? Was there anything that you found surprising or confusing?
2. Do you think Paul's view of freedom (v. 2) is different from most popular beliefs about freedom? How so? In what ways are they similar?
3. Why do you think Paul can say that loving others sums up the entire Old Testament law? What about loving God, as Jesus says in Matthew 22:37?
4. Paul was clearly bothered by how the Galatian believers were treating each other. Have you ever experienced the kind of behavior he describes in v. 15 from other believers?
5. According to Paul, we're always being led by either the Spirit or our sinful nature (vv. 16-17), but we have the ability to choose between them. Is that always a conscious choice we make? Should it be?
6. How do the fruits of the sinful nature (v. 19-21) vs. those of the Spirit (vv. 22-23) reflect Paul's bigger point that living by the Spirit always results in loving others, whereas acting out of the sinful nature only leads to "biting and devouring" each other?
7. Based on Paul's description, what sort of relationships should we expect to find within the church? Has that been your experience?
8. Have you experienced spiritual growth, i.e., fruit, through your relationships with other believers? What do you think prevents us from growing even when we're part of a church?

Prayer

Often a position of submission helps us physically connect with the spiritual reality of meeting God. A posture of kneeling with open hands can demonstrate our willingness to submit to God's power.

- Praise God for the freedom that you have because Jesus has rescued you from trying to be good enough for heaven.

- Confess any ways that you've abused your freedom by treating other people thoughtlessly or callously.
- Tell God about any wounds or hurt you've received at the hands of believers who should have known better. Ask God to give you healing, the strength to forgive, and, *if possible and prudent*, the courage to lovingly confront those who hurt you.
- Ask God to help you to live in the new reality of your life with Jesus (vv. 24-25), to experience spiritual growth, and to help contribute to the kind of healthy community we want to be.