

## **GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** (FOR JANUARY 31, 2021) For Community Groups or Personal Study

As we conclude the month of January (it's difficult for me to believe we are already one month into 2021) we turn from John's book (which is *all about Jesus*) to Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus (which is *all about Jesus*). The first century was a divided world, similar to our day. Paul speaks clearly about Unity.

As we continue in our study of the 2021 Church we are seeking to understand who we are as God's people, and how that impacts our life. Unity among Christians, whether in Ephesus or here at Grace of Christ, is not optional, it is expected. Even when we differ on particular, non-essential, beliefs and practices, if we are genuine in our desire to love Jesus, follow Him, honor Him, we will passionately pursue unity. Our unity is built on the understanding that what connects us, unifies us, defines us, is stronger, bigger, more important, than anything attempting to pull us apart. Unity for us is *all about Jesus*.

At Grace, even when we disagree, we are called to love and respect others. We willingly give up our preferences so that we can listen to, and love, others because, at the center of EVERYTHING, including our church and our life, is Jesus.

## **2021.CHURCH**

**SERMON PASSAGE:** EPHESIANS 4:1-6

"<sup>1</sup> I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Throughout the month of January our focus has been on unity because unity is a priority for Jesus. We continue highlighting unity as we shift from Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17 to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Ephesus was an important center for business, politics, and religion. It was a seaport located on the west coast of what is now the country of Turkey. Paul visited Ephesus on two separate occasions (briefly on his second missionary journey: Acts 18:19-21, two years + during his third missionary journey: 19:1-20:1 and parting words to church

leaders: 20:17-38). His connection with the Ephesians, and the growing Christian church there was strong. He also faced intense opposition from a group of craftsmen in Ephesus who made religious souvenirs for those visiting the Temple of Artemis (at one point considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World). They were afraid that as the Christians increased the need for their trinkets would decrease. In his letter to the Ephesians he emphasized the grace of God, the sufficiency of Jesus, and God's call for unity among Christian believers.

1. What do we know about Paul from this morning's passage?
2. Read the passage again. Highlight the words that stand out to you. Write them here. Do you see any common themes?
3. Why do you think Paul included in this letter a reminder about unity: one faith, one baptism, one Lord?

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

4. Why does Paul mention he is a prisoner for the Lord? Does that add to, or subtract from, his message?
5. What are Christians "called" to? How can they walk in a way worthy of their calling?
6. What is the basis for Paul's reminder to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"? Is there more than one source for Christian unity? Discuss.

### **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

7. If you are a Christian, how are you walking in a manner worthy of the calling God has given you? If you are not a Christian, how and why do you live the life you do?
8. How are you attempting to build genuine, loving relationships with, to demonstrate unity with, those outside your normal circle of friends and acquaintances?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. In your prayer ask God to help you to build friendships with others at Grace of Christ who are not in your typical circle of friends? Ask Him to help you focus on what unites rather than what divides. Ask God for humility, courage and patience. God will help you!