

Lesson Title: "Maintaining The Body: The Church- Unity, Peace & Ligaments"

Scripture Basis: Ephesians Chapter 4, Key Verses 3-6, 7 and 16

Today's Learning Activities:

- Review Ephesians 4 and highlights from last week
- Further examine verse 3 and 16
- Use Group activities and discussion to make more contemporary and personal meaning of these scriptures

Learning Goals:

- Give at least 2 examples or metaphors that explain how important we are to each other in The Body of Christ.
- Discuss how The Holy Spirit's role in our human actions help expand God's Church based on scriptures in Ephesians 4-5.

REVIEW- Ephesians 4 Bible Background

Author: Paul

Time Period: About 60 years after Resurrection Sunday

Type/Style: Letter ("epistle")

Audience: Church in Ephesus (ancient: Roman Province called Asia portion of Roman Empire and trade center; modern area: Turkey)

Reason: (chapter 4) Instruct Church of Ephesus how to maintain unity and peace as one "body" led by Christ to do His work of adding more people.



Figure 1 Modern World Map Showing Turkey and surrounding countries of Europe, Asia and Africa



Figure 2 Map Showing Location of Ephesus and other Early Churches Mentioned in the New Testament

(Review of Ephesians 4 Bible Background Continued)

Paul wrote this letter to the newly developing Christian church in Ephesus. Paul's work with other early church architects in Ephesus is captured throughout the book of Acts. In this letter, Paul writes to focus on how to build key institutions that reflect the will of God, such as "The Church" and families. The church in Ephesus looked like the major capital city: diverse with Jewish and Gentile peoples, all types of beliefs and practices, and peoples from many different national, ethnic, language, career, etc. backgrounds. How were all of these people of The World- who also had "worldly" (sinful) behaviors and practices they were used to- supposed to come together and be "1" in this church? Paul writes to instruct them to keep The Holy Spirit at the center of everything they do. And at the same time recognize that everybody has a place and a job in God's Church: sometimes called "The Body".

Paul stresses the importance of each person in God's Church. Metaphors are used to help illuminate how important each person and their job is for all other persons, or parts of the body. Even the very history of this New Testament letter offers insight and reinforcement of people each and all playing a role to care for each other and coming together to support the overall mission of Christ: save humanity (salvation). Paul is imprisoned when writing this and other letters, and depends on a fellow believer and servant (Tychicus) to deliver this letter from Rome to Ephesus.

EXAMINE & DISCUSS- Focal Verse 3 Unity & Peace

Ephesians 4:3 and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together.

- **Unity:** oneness, togetherness
- **Peace:** no war or fighting; tranquil; undisturbed

Rewind to last week: God doesn't ask us to *create* unity and peace (only He creates those). Instead, He asks us to *maintain* (keep, continue) them. He gives us the resources to do His will, specifically The Holy Spirit for unity and peace. **Verse 3 instructs and commands us to center The Holy Spirit as the main force and focal point for unity and peace.**

Group Activity: Each group will choose a "Truth or Dare" activity; then briefly discuss a reply to the conversation starter below. Each group will have 5 minutes to prepare together; and 2 minutes to present.

Conversation Starter: How does The Holy Spirit help with...

Group 1: Unity

Group 2: Peace

Group 3: Who gets to be in "The Body of Christ"

EXAMINE & ANSWER- Focal Verse 16 Keeping The Body Together

Ephesians 4:16 who is the head. The whole body grows from him, as it is joined and held together by all the supporting ligaments. The body makes itself grow in that it builds itself up with love as each one does its part.

Rewind to last week: We talked about ligaments (connective tissue that is strong and flexible, connects bones, and supports movements) and compared them to our individual role to keep all parts of the body connected with our kingdom jobs.

Group Activity: Each group will list out their various jobs or roles they have for God (or ones they want to have). This can be a role or ministry they participate within Benevolent Love Ministries, as well as throughout our communities and across the world. **Text your group's replies to: 216-832-5431 with your group number.** We will review as a large group.

Missing Pieces: *What happens if something is missing in the body?* The developmental stage, area of the body, or the reason something is missing can make a big difference.

- **Still developing**
- **Not there, yet**
- **Hurt, Sick, Damaged, Not Working**

After hearing some human body examples, respond to these real life examples relating to these metaphors but applied in "The Church Body"?

- **Still Developing:**
How do we intentionally include and support youth (especially teens) in The Body?
- **Not there, yet:**
What does your worship, praise and prayers have to do with building up members of The Body: who are not here yet?
- **Hurt, Sick, Damaged, Not Working:**
How do we help *nurse* and *heal* members of the body?

Music Snapshot to remind us of the importance of each member of God's Church:

- "I Need You to Survive"- Hezekiah Walker
- "I Belong Here"- Rudy Currence

CONCLUDE & CONNECT: Ephesians 5:21's Clear Instruction for The Church

Ephesians 5:21 gives a very clear instruction on maintaining unity and peace in The Body. Ephesians 4 listed examples of different parts of The Body, or jobs and roles that people do in God's Church (local and worldwide), and noted they were all interconnected, all important, and all led by Christ who serves as the head. Let's connect these verses to each other -and- to real life everyday living (life application).

Reading Ephesians 5:21 in different versions:

- **"Subject yourself to one another in the fear of Christ." (NASB 2020)**
 - **Subject** (verb)- cause someone or something to do something
- **"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (NIV)**
 - **Submit** (verb)- yield or make way for someone or something else
- **"and submit to each other out of respect for Christ." (CEB)**
- **"Be willing to obey each other. Do this because you respect Christ." (ICB)**
 - **Obey** (verb)- do what was instructed, follow

Conclusion: The human body is interconnected: every system depends on the other system directly or indirectly with the goal of being healthy and living life. We each are interconnected with God as the head, and us the parts of the body. The nose has to do its job well, while the calf muscle does its job well. Each part has appropriate and intentional jobs in order to be effective (get to the goal/outcomes).

Ephesians 4 gives us a goal to be unified (many parts together as one) and be peaceful (healthy) so we can be effective in the growth of God's Church: inviting and including more people to be saved...and then they become a part and invite and include even more people. This is impossible to expand without being led by Christ, who also instructs us to lead each other how He does: out of love.

It is impossible for us to do this simply as human beings. However, The Holy Spirit enables (allows, gives power) for us to do this. Just like different organs in the body, which without the breath of life are just pieces connected by other pieces. But when those pieces have life, then they can function together in unity and peace. The Holy Spirit, *again*, helps us maintain unity as The Body of Christ (or Church) as it also gives it (and us) life.

Things why it is important to do the practical and important daily disciplines to strengthen your connection and your ability to obey The Holy Spirit. Keep your Bible Study and Sunday School notes handy for your daily learning and healthy living as a member of the Body of Christ.