

Going Deeper April 25, 2010

Build Up the Body of Christ: To the Praise of His Glory

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 and Romans 15:1-6.

Jesus intends for us to learn how to live with one another in community. We are a community of believers with much in common: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Savior, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father (reference Eph 4:4-6). The second half of Eph chapter 4 focuses on how we should act and behave within the body of Christ. How we should live and conduct our lives. Since we are the literal hands and feet of Jesus, we must remember that many eyes are watching us. Some, seeking the truth, are curious about how we live our lives. Others are skeptical and looking for an excuse to discredit us and say we are hypocrites. Paul uses these verses in Ephesians to admonish the Ephesians into a living a life worthy of the calling of Christ in our lives. Remember as individuals our purpose is to bring glory to God. The purpose of the body of Christ is to do no less than to collectively bring glory to Jesus.

When someone in our personal family does something great we gain a sense of pride. Parents display bumper stickers on the family car that say, "I'm proud of my honor student." Stickers of football helmets and soccer balls with children's names and player numbers adorn many a back window in the parking lot. Why don't we see stickers of jail cells or rap sheets on the family car? How about bumper stickers that say, "I'm proud of my prison inmate"? While the question is rhetorical the answer is simple: we don't take much pride in the failures of our family members. The old saying, "Don't do anything to embarrass the family name" holds even more weight for body of Christ. It isn't that God worries about scoffers having an excuse for not believing. It isn't that His love can't cover your sins. It's that Jesus wants to use us to draw others into His family. He wants the church to be an inviting place. He wants it to be a place that reflects His love. A love that He had for us that was so strong He died for it.

Group Discussion

- 1) In Eph. 4:17-19, Paul tells the readers not to be like the gentiles. What did he mean by this?
- 2) How do we behave like "gentiles" today?
- 3) As you read through Eph. 4:25-31, what are the things Paul instructs about behavior and why? What are the practical problems that arise from each of the sins described in these verses? How do they adversely affect the church?

Read Romans 12:1-2; Eph. 4:20-24; Eph. 5:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; and 1 Peter 1:13-16.

- 4) What are some of the reasons we are told how to live in these verses? (you should be able to name many of them)
- 5) Why do you think Paul wraps up this chapter of Ephesians in v. 32 with a simple request like forgive one another?
- 6) If the church doesn't work as Jesus intended it to work, what are the implications?

Life Application

- 7) Do you view the church as the literal hands and feet of Jesus? Why or why not?
- 8) How do your actions and attitudes build up or hinder the church?
- 9) How do you deal with conflict and personal relationships within the body of Christ?
- 10) What do you need to do to make your contributions to the Church and it's work in this world more impactful?