

WALKING TOGETHER

Sunday August 16, 2026

Ephesians 4:1–3 (NLT) Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Introduction: The Apostle Paul urgently encourages believers to diligently live out their Christian calling.

When Paul talks about calling, he isn't talking about a career. He is talking about the new life God has called us into through Jesus.

Why is this important? Because unity is central to the mission of the church. Division weakens the church, small groups, families and communities.

Francis Schaeffer wrote *"Our relationship with each other is the criterion the world uses to judge whether our message is truthful."*

The question this morning isn't simply, "How do we stay united as Christians?" The deeper question is, "How do we stay united when the people we are walking with aren't at their best?"

We often say that a healthy church or small group can become like a family and that's a beautiful picture. But if we're going to call it a family, we also must recognize that it comes with family dynamics.

Families are made up of different personalities, backgrounds, expectations, strengths, and weaknesses. And just like any family, there will be moments of disagreement, disappointment, misunderstanding, and even frustration.

That's part of doing life together.

So maybe we need to change the way we think about joining a church or a small group. WE need to change our mindset from consumer to contributor.

- A consumer asks: *"Will this church or group feel like family to me?"*
- A contributor asks: *"How can I help someone else experience family?"*

Instead of simply saying, "Join a small group and you'll find family," what if we challenged every person in the group to ask: "How can I help someone experience family?"

Building this kind of family means walking together when things aren't perfect.

And that doesn't mean we ignore sin, tolerate abuse, or pretend problems don't exist. There are times when love and wisdom require boundaries, accountability, and even separation for safety.

Walking together isn't just celebrating the good moments. It's learning how to love and serve one another through the difficult ones.

Extending grace when someone disappoints us. Being patient when someone is still growing. Forgiving when someone gets it wrong. And being humble enough to recognize that sometimes we are the ones who need the grace.

And that is exactly where the Holy Spirit though Paul takes us.

1. UNITY IS GOD'S IDEA

Notice in verse 3 how Paul refers to unity, as the unity of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT) Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

(NCV) You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.

(AMP) Make every effort to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace [each individual working together to make the whole successful].

The unity he refers to is one that the Spirit creates.

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NLT) For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

Our unity isn't about having the same personality, preferences, opinions nor rooting for the same sports teams. It comes from sharing the same God, the same Spirit and the same new life in Christ.

Christianity isn't about trying harder to become a better person. It begins with what God did for us through Jesus. When we placed our faith in Christ, God the Father, by His Spirit, gave us new life and joined us to His family, the church.

We don't create this unity, we receive it. Our responsibility is to preserve and protect what the Holy Spirit has already created.

That my brothers and sisters take work!

2. PROTECTING UNITY TAKES WORK

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT) Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

It's not always easy to live, work, or walk with people. But if we are going to protect the unity the Spirit has created, we must have to learn to treat one another in a Spirit-formed way.

Ephesians 4:2 (NLT) Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Notice that every one of these qualities assumes something: people won't always be at their best. There will be faults, weaknesses, differences, and moments when we disappoint one another.

It would be nice if we could master humility, gentleness, patience, and love before we get married, get a job, join a church, or become part of a small group. But that's not how these graces are developed.

These graces are practiced and refined in community.

Making allowance for someone's faults is not the same as enabling destructive behavior.

And that doesn't mean we ignore sin, tolerate abuse, or pretend problems don't exist. There are times when love and wisdom require boundaries, accountability, and even separation for safety.

Biblical unity isn't the absence of problems; it's learning to confront and walk through them with truth and grace.

You don't learn patience by yourself. You learn patience when someone tests it.

It's easy to think we're patient when nobody is irritating us. It's easy to think we're forgiving when nobody has hurt us. It's easy to think we're humble when nobody disagrees with us.

Relationships don't just reveal what's wrong with other people. They reveal what's happening inside of us.

Community doesn't just reveal where we need to grow; community is one of the places God uses to grow us.

You cannot learn the graces of community apart from community.

Application:

1. Give people room to grow

Don't define people by one mistake, a bad day or a difficult interaction. People won't always be at their best. Today it may be them; tomorrow it may be you.

2. Talk to people, not about people

If there is a misunderstanding, go to them. Don't talk to everyone else except the person you need to talk to.

3. Learn to let some things go

Not every irritation needs to become a big issue. Not every problem needs not be resolved in your favor. Sometimes protecting unity means choosing grace and simply letting something go.

4. Care for each other when life gets difficult

Community is more than just getting together; it means showing up for one another in times of need.

When someone is sick, grieving, struggling financially or just walking through a difficult season, look for ways to help.

You may not be able to help everyone, but you can help someone. Take a meal. Make a visit. Make a call. Pray. Or simply be present.

Community isn't a gathering of perfect people. It's a place where imperfect people learn to give and receive grace.