June 28, 2020

Coming Together: Part 2

*RE**N**E**W**ED Series*

Ephesians 4:1-6

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Well, good morning, Lincoln Berean Church. It is good to see you again. It's good to see your faces again. Isn't it good to gather each week? I'm so thankful for the opportunity we have to do this. If you're not able to join us yet, we are thankful that you're tuning in online, but young and old alike, I see a few kids here this morning—maybe give me a high five. "Asher, high five!" We are glad you're here this morning. If you were with us last week, you'll recall that we began to unpack a vision that we are trying to walk through with you this summer. Josh, last week, introduced that vision and it's right here—*coming together*. This is who we want to be: We want to be a people coming together to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same. That's our vision: *coming together to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same.* Josh talked about how this isn't new. That's why we're calling it *RE**N**E**W**ED*. This is a refreshed vision for what the church has always been about. This is who we want to be as a church. And last week Josh began to unpack this first part of that phrase—what it means for us to come together—and he drew this distinction. I don't know if you remember it, but he drew a distinction between being a crowd and being a congregation. As Josh was drawing that distinction, a conversation I had a few years back came to mind immediately. I was talking with a young guy and he said this to me, "You know, I love coming to Lincoln Berean. You guys do what you do so well. I can come. I just hear a good message. I sing. No one bothers me, and I can just go home." He thought it was a compliment, right? I wanted to say to him, "That's not what we're aiming at. That's not who we want to be." He didn't know that, and of course I didn't go into it with him at that moment. But it raises that question, "What is it that makes us different? What is the difference between a crowd and a congregation? What is it that makes us, as the church, as Lincoln Berean Church—but as the local church—what is it that makes us unique, different than other gatherings?

I want to argue with you this morning, or kind of unpack the idea with you that it is the quality of the relationship between us; it's the quality of our gathering. It's the character of our gathering that sets us apart, that makes us unique. So, this morning we want to talk about the distinguishing marks of Christian community. What are the distinguishing marks? In order to do that, we're going to look at some words of Paul's to the church in Ephesus. So, turn with me to Ephesians, Chapter 4. We're just going to look at verses 1 through 6. Before we do that, I do want to say that, in light of all that's happening in our world right now, sometimes, you know, when we enter church, we think, "Oh, I should just put all that away, just put all that away and just focus." But you know, today, I kind of want to ask you to keep that as background because part of what we're to be as a community has bearing on the way that we interact with our world, of course, right? So, as we go through these next few minutes, think about what's been going on in our culture and the way we've responded to it. Maybe think about that and have that be the background as we listen to Paul's words. So, Ephesians 4, verse 1, Paul says:

> **Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called…** (*NASB, Ephesians 4:1)

Now, it's always difficult to dive right into the middle of a text, but because we're doing this series this summer, a lot of our sermons are going to kind of be jumping into the middle of a text. And so I need to give you a little bit of a background, okay? So, Paul in Ephesians, chapters 1 through 3 has been unpacking the incredible nature of the gospel—the incredible nature of what God did in Christ. So, in chapter 2 he talks about how all of us, Jew and Gentile alike—and when we think about Jew and Gentile in Scripture, that means Jews and everyone else; that's who the Gentiles are, right? That's us, everyone from all their varied backgrounds—how all of us were dead in our trespasses and sins. Hopeless, dead, apart from God. But then, what God did in Christ, He reconciled all of us—Jew and Gentile, every people group with every varied background—He reconciled all of us to God, to Himself, through the blood of the cross. He took these two distinct people, Jew and Gentile, and made them into one unified people through the blood of the cross. He reconciled us to Himself. And what follows from that is that we are reconciled to one another. There are no longer these divisions, because we were all brought to God through the same man, through Jesus Christ. And what Paul begins to argue is that that has incredible implications for the way that our life should be lived. The gospel and all that follows in its wake should totally change the way we interact with the world. That's why he has these strong words. He says, **I implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called**.

Now, **walk**. That word, whenever you read it in Paul, typically means *live*. He's talking about the way we live now. **I implore you to live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.** This word **calling**. Sometimes in the church we kind of make this word a big word, don't we? We talk about being *called* to be a missionary or being *called* to be a pastor, being *called* to be a director of a ministry or something like that, about vocational *calling*—really specific. But what Paul is talking about here is the calling that sits on each one of us in this room today and each person that finds their identity in Jesus. This **calling** now is to live as the restored, reconciled people, to live in a way that we're talking about this summer…to come to know Jesus, to become more like Him and to help others do the same, to be about this ministry of reconciliation. That's at the heart of the gospel. That's the calling that sits on each one of us, Church. That's our calling. That's not *my* calling as a pastor, that's *our* calling as a church. So, he says, **walk in a manner worthy of that calling.** So, what would that look like? Well, in verse 2 he says:

> **…with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love…**

Paul had this unique ability to pack so much content into such a little amount of space. In the Greek, this whole section, verses 1 to 6, that's one sentence, right? It's like one run-on sentence. I love it! My wife always reads anything I write and she's like, "This is like the whole paragraph; it's one sentence." That's Paul. He writes these loaded paragraphs, and every word in here matters. Sometimes we're liable to kind of breeze right by, "Oh yeah, I get it," but we've got to understand that the Bible is very economical with its use of words. No word is in there without it being on purpose. The authors of the Scriptures weren't like college students trying to hit a word count, right? Maybe if I say this in thirteen words, I'll get it a little closer, right? That's not what this is about. Each one of these words is loaded with meaning, and what Paul has done here is he's

unpacked four character traits of the believer, of the follower of Jesus, and of the community that is called Christian community. It says …**humility, gentleness, patience, and love**. So, if you'll bear with me, I want to camp on those words for a few minutes this morning, just want to unpack what that means.

So the first word, **humility**. What is humility? In our culture, we tend to look down a little bit on humility, I think. I think sometimes we talk about the humble person as being the person that's kind of *self-belittling*. Or they say, "I don't have any skills; I don't have any talents Woe is me." You know, if they're in a cartoon, they're the person that kicks the ground as they walk along…thinking small of yourself. Sometimes that's the way we think of humility but that's not really humility at all. In the biblical sense, humility is keeping yourself or *seeing yourself in proper perspective*. It's thinking accurately about yourself. It's thinking accurately about yourself, particularly in your relation to God.

Andrew Murray was a South African preacher, and he wrote a book on this topic and it was called *Humility,* of all things. It's a little book but it is loaded with content, loaded with important things to say. I highly recommend it. But Andrew Murray has this to say. "Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is the first duty of the creature, and the root of every good quality." Humility is seeing our self in the proper light, especially in relation to God. We are entirely dependent people. It's what it means to start stepping in the direction of humility. Now, let me just say that is only possible for any one of us in this room because of the gospel. It's only possible because we know that God has restored us. He's redeemed us and we now are with Him and He cares for us.

Humility is a little bit ridiculous, a little countercultural in our world, because in our world the mindset is, "If I don't look out for myself, if I don't look out for number one, who will?" Right? "So, I've got to take care of myself." But complete dependence upon God says, "God's going to take care of me. God has me. He has my back. He has my reputation. And because of that, I'm free to live dependently. I'm free to walk in humility." It's an incredibly freeing thing. It's only possible because of the gospel.

When I was thinking about humility, the person that came to mind immediately for me is the guy who was my best friend when I lived in Madrid. His name was Warren. Warren, I think knew, he saw himself accurately, and he knew that he actually was a pretty prideful person. And because of that, he said, "I don't want that." And so, he kind of has made it his life's work to pursue humility, to understand humility. So, what did I see in Warren? This is so interesting. When we first arrived in Madrid, there was a group of us from Nebraska that showed up, and who was it that said, "You know, there's some believers in our neighborhood. We should gather a prayer meeting for them because, just because we want to bless them." It was Warren. He rallied together other believers; they came and they prayed for us. It meant so much to us. Who was the person that always was quick to drop whatever they were doing and just lend a hand, and help? It was Warren. He was always quick to serve, quick to give his finances, quick to give us his time. You stay up all hours of the night, and in Madrid "all hours of the night" means "all hours of the morning", right? It could be till 5am. It's Warren. He just gave without presumption. And what I saw as I watched his life, was that Warren kind of started to think that he didn't need, because of his freedom in Christ. He didn't need to constantly push to have his way. He didn't need to pretend to be something he's not so everyone would be impressed by him. He didn't presume that anyone, even God, should

have given him more than he currently had. He lived in this posture of dependence. And around Warren there started to kind of spring up this culture of just flourishing, people that felt cared for. Warren was living this countercultural life, and his life started to look like the stream in this desert that was Madrid. His countercultural life began to create around him, people that felt like they could flourish, people that felt like they were cared for. He was humble. And so, when we gather together, what we hope is that, by God's grace, we can be a people that are marked by humility, that we're a God-dependent people, not pretenders, not pushers to get our way. But that when people look at us in our city, they say "You know, that people—that group of Lincoln Berean people—they are humble people. They don't think about themselves a lot. They think about God a lot. They think about others a lot." See, where there's humility, division and presumption go away because God is the One on whom we're dependent. We want to be a humble people. That's the first mark of Christian community.

Next Paul uses this word **gentleness**, and like humility, I think gentleness is also a word that we don't look up to too much. You know, I don't know that too many people would say, "Oh, it's such a compliment; he said I was gentle." You know, we sometimes think of gentle is like the opposite of defending yourself or standing up for yourself, that kind of thing. But of course, gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, right? Jesus was described, Himself, as being gentle. I was reading one commentary that had this to say, "Gentleness, to be gentle is to renounce harshness and violence." Another said this, "Gentleness carried the sense of the middle ground between constant anger at everyone, and no anger at all." It kind of lives in that tension.

Now, if you asked me to describe our world today, one of the first words that would come to mind would be angry—angry at everyone. And, Church, we need to be careful with anger. Alright, we live in that world, and we're going to be shaped by it. We need to be careful with anger because anger—I'm just going to be honest—it's intoxicating. Anger feels good. Anger also always is justified, isn't it? Have you ever met somebody that said, "Well, I was caught up in unrighteous indignation."? It's always righteous. Our indignation always is self-justified. Our anger is always self-justified, and there are reasons to be angry, but we don't want to be people given over to anger, that live in unbridled anger. We want to be gentle. We want to live in this temperate region where we know what to be angry about, where we're not given over to harshness and vindictiveness. We want to live in a way that demonstrates that we're not going to be permissive. That's not who we can be as a people, but we can be tempered. We can be gentle.

Here's another story. This one's a little more embarrassing. I, as a 20-something—early 20's, sometime when I got out of college—I had a particular temptation for those credit card kiosks. You know, those tents, when you go to a football game or something, there'll be a tent up and they'll sell a credit card, but they'll give away some free stuff with it, or they'll just give away a credit card. But there's free stuff, and I wanted the free stuff always. That one-size-fits-all T-shirt, got to have it, right? The seat cushion, the visor that you'll never wear, the stuff that will end up in garage sales. I wanted that stuff. So, I was a sucker. I signed up for nearly every credit card that I walked by, right? Aw, that credit card has a Cubs logo; I should get that one. And of course I got them, right? because they know I'm the sucker they're after. So, I got my credit cards and, on two occasions I ran those credit cards up a bit too far, way higher than I could handle. I was a barista. If you don't know who that is, that's the person that makes your coffee at Starbucks and at Scooters. I love those jobs but they're not well paid, just in case you wondered. So, I was making coffee, but

I had this other thing that I really liked and that was Chipotle burritos. I really liked Chipotle burritos, and I would eat them all the time. One day, eight days in a row dinner, right? It's all about Chipotle. So I ran those credit cards up with Chipotle and a few other things, and before long, I was in way over my head…way over my head. And I didn't know what to do. I was in my early 20's and just out of college.

So, I had to go; I went to talk to my parents. I didn't know what to do because I was in trouble, and what I got from them was a crash course in gentleness. What did they do? Well, they didn't yell at me. They didn't malign me. They didn't chastise me. They didn't say, "You dummy. How could you have been so foolish?" But they weren't permissive. They didn't let me off the hook. They helped me wear the weight of the debt that I had gotten myself into. But they did it in a gentle way. They did it in a temperate way. They walked with me, and we found solutions to, "How are we going to get out of this mess?" And when I came out of the fog, what I found was that what had happened in my relationship with my parents was that trust had been built to a greater degree. We were more unified. I knew I could lean on them because I could count on them to be gentle when I get myself in a bind.

We need that don't we, as a people? Don't we all need that? We need to extend that but we also need to receive it, because, as a Christian community, of course we're going to get in trouble from time to time, aren't we? We're not going to do it all right. We're not going to be perfect in the way that we go about our life, or the way we respond to every situation. So, we want to be a community that fosters gentleness. Now, as a people of the Word, that doesn't mean permissive. Sometimes that starts to mean permissive in our culture—just let things go—acquiesce. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about standing for what is good, standing for what is true, but doing that in a spirit of gentleness, not given over to harsh anger. See, harshness causes division but gentleness, brought about by the Spirit of God, stirs up unity among people. We want to be a gentle people.

Next Paul says this word **patience**. Now patience is a description of someone that has given up the tyranny of having to have their own way in their own time, with their agenda being the primary thing, someone who's let go of that. And of course, at its root, patience understands that people change slowly, don't they? It's an understanding of people. People change slowly, if at all. And sometimes when I think about patience, I just like to think about how patient God is with me. Have you ever considered the patience of God? Two thousand years, about, from Abraham to Jesus, He's just walking with His people, shaping them into what He wants them to be, not necessarily trying to speed them up to the year one thousand or something, right? God's just walking with His people. Two thousand years later—from Jesus until right now—and He's still faithfully, patiently, walking with us as people. We need patience.

You know, with the current setting, the current cultural moment that we're in with the racial tension that has come to the fore once again, if you ask me, this is a time that calls for loads of patience! Over the past ten days, I've had a number of meetings with people that have been personally affected by what's been transpiring lately. And this has provoked for them pain that goes back into their history and goes back generations for them. But I've sat and I've listened to personal stories that affected them personally because of either the color of their skin or the color of their friend's skin or the color of their children's skin. And I've listened to these personal stories of, of hatred

and racism right here in our city, and I just had to say to them, “I'm so sorry; I'm so sorry. I don't think I knew that was happening to you. And I'm so sorry.” And I needed them to be patient with me as I listened and learned. Josh talked about this last week. We want to be a people that are listening, that are learning, and that requires loads of patience. We want to be that kind of people that are in agreement with what we think, but also with the people that don't agree with us. I want to be a patient person.

There's one particular conversation that I had with a member of our congregation who happens to be African American. And as we sat there, I was able to just ask question after question, and they were so patient with me. They were so gentle and kind with me. And I can say boldly that when we left my office, there was a spirit of unity among us as we dealt patiently with one another. That was something that only God can bring about, and we need that! Let us be a patient people…a patient church…a church that's marked by listening, a church that's marked by learning. Even when people don't agree with us, we're marked by patience. And what will happen? I know it will, because this is what God has done time and time again, and that is, as we seek Him, as He teaches us to be patient, He causes us to grow spiritually. And then He also grows this quality of unity among us. Be a patient people.

Finally, Paul rounds out this whole description with this word **love**. And love often in Scripture is always kind of the last word because it's so glorious. It's so all-encompassing. If you get love, a lot of times that just means you’ve got the other stuff too. But we need to talk about love because love gets a little watered down in our culture, right? Taylor Swift tells us about love, right? The movies that we watch tell us about love. But what we want to do is keep an eye on what is meant by this biblical idea of love, because so often in our culture, love starts to mean desire. It means, “I really, really want something really bad.” And so we'll even use the word love just kind of haphazardly, right? “I love coffee.” “I love chocolate cake.” But of course, what we want to do to those two things is to devour them, right? Right! I don't love those things; I just really like them.

So the biblical concept of love carries this meaning of when I love something, when I love someone, I seek with all my heart, by an act of the will, to bring about good in the life of that person. I'm pursuing the good as an act of the volition; I'm aligning my life to pour good into this person's life. And *good* is defined by what God says is good. And so when I say, “I love you,” it means I'm seeking what is good for you, and that's so different than being at the mercy of our desires. That's what we mean when we say love. And so, what would it look like if the quality of love was increasing among us? That’s the kind of love that God has for us. God loves you. He seeks what is good for you. He is stirring up blessings for you. We don't always see it, but that's what He's doing. And that's what He's always doing.

So instead of telling some personal story, I actually wanted to give you a homework assignment. As you go, consider sometime this week all the ways that God has been good to you. How has God's love made itself manifest in your life? God likes you a lot, but He also loves you. He seeks what is good for you and, in the middle of a year and a half for me that started horribly with my father dying, I can just still say for the past year and a half, God has been so good. God has been so good to me. And love lived out among us, empowered by God's very Spirit, will bring about in us—the people of God—this *coming together people*—unity among us.

Now as Paul continues, he gives one final charge for unity. He says this in verse 3:

> **…being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

If you can't hear it, Paul is incredibly emphatic. This whole section started with this word **I implore you**; I *urge you***;** *I emphatically ask you.* But he gives us a little insight here. He says, I implore you *to be diligent to keep the* ***unity***. The insight there is that this isn't automatic, Church, is it? See, God has unified us—He's brought us into unity. But then Paul turns and says now I implore you to **preserve** it. Don't let it fade. Seek to stir it up, because unity among us, just like humility and gentleness and patience and love, they aren't foregone conclusions. They're things that we have to strive for, seeking God's very empowering Spirit to help us do it. He's saying, "I urge you to seek after **unity**, and let **peace** be like the bow that ties it all up—**in the bond of peace.**

So, as I was reading this, I thought, "You know, if we are going to fight about anything, let's fight to keep unity. If we're going to outdo one another in anything, let's try to outdo one another in being humble and gentle and patient and loving and seeking after unity, that we might live as the congregation of God." Now, it's important to say that unity doesn't mean sameness does it? It doesn't mean that we're all the same. But what it does mean is that we are bonded together. We are covenanted together by God. And we serve the same God; we're united by the one Spirit, and we are committed to one another. That's how we're unified.

As Paul brings this whole thing to a close, he turns back to some of the theology that's been in chapters one through three and I, as I was reading verses four through six, and studying them, it just feels like it's this emphatic kind of exclamation point! Paul's basically trying to emphasize, "Why is unity so critical? Why is it so worth fighting for? What's the grounding of it?"

And so as I read these last three verses, listen to these two words, ***one*** and ***all,*** because he just repeats them over and over again. Verse 4:

> ***There is*** **one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.** (Vs. 4-6)

Paul is closing and he's saying, "Listen, are you struggling with understanding why unity is so important, why it's worth fighting for, why that should mark us as a people?" And then he kind of says, "Have you forgotten the facts? This is Who we serve. This is Who has brought us together. We all are united; we all have been reconciled because of the work of the one God and He has done the same thing in all of us." And so there's no room for division. There's no room for hierarchy. There's no room for any of that, because what He has done in me, He has done in you, and we are all following Him together, equal. The playing field has been leveled. Therefore, we should be humble.

And so our prayer is that, as we gather together, that we wouldn't be a crowd, but that we would be a congregation—that we'd be a people marked by these things—that we'd be unified. Our prayer is that, as we try to live out the Christian life with one another, as we do this here, as we do this in our small groups, as we do this in our neighborhoods, that there would be this increasing spirit of

unity among us, because we are becoming people of *humility* and *gentleness* and *patience*, and *love*.

The truth is, what we're hoping is that as we're gathering together, our gathering begins to look like something different than what you see in the world. Actually it begins to look like *Someone* different. It begins to look like Jesus Himself. So the question is, "Where do we begin?" Of course, right? "Where do we begin?" This all sounds nice; "I want that, but where do I start?" And the answer, of course is, "I start with me." I say, "Lord, as I gather with others, am I gathering in the Spirit of Christ? Am I gathering as You would? Am I unified? Am I soaked in kindness, humility, patience, gentleness, and love?"

Chances are I'm not, Church, right? We're still in this battle of becoming like Him. And the truth is: "I, in my own strength, can't be humble in the way that I need to be humble." But Jesus can supply that for me. The truth is, "I can't be gentle in the way I need to be gentle," but Jesus can, and He can help me. The same can be said for patience and for love. The truth is that I need Jesus to help me be who He's called me to be, and that's why it's so critical that we be a people that are coming together to know Him more deeply. And that's what we want to talk about next week.

As we close, I want you just to imagine for a minute, what it would be like to be in a community—to be part of a congregation—that is marked by the very Spirit of Christ that's stirring up humility and gentleness and patience and love…a unified community! Imagine the vitality of coming together in those gatherings. I think we'd say, "We can't get enough of it! I need more of that because it's so otherworldly." Right? It's from above; it's given by God. It would bring about this vitality in each one of us, but not just that. I think it would stand out as a stark testimony to our world. To be a community of blessing that's situated right in the middle of a world and a culture that is focused on curse, that's stuck—marked by the curse. So, we want to be a people, a blessing. Church, let us become that. That's what marks us. That's what distinguishes us as a community of Christ. As God's people, we want to be points of constant blessing moving out into the world. And that starts right here.

As we close, instead of ending with a prayer, I actually wanted to speak a blessing to you. And, in a moment, we're going to sing it. I'm sure you're familiar with the song. It's been going around a lot since March. It's a blessing that God gave to Aaron and He said, "Speak this blessing over Israel." So it's hard to come up with something much better than one that God gave to Aaron, right? So I want you to receive this blessing and then we're going to sing it. And this is a blessing, ultimately, that we want to say, "I want, Lord, this to be true of me." But it also is one that we speak and pray for other people, for those who are around us, for those that are brothers and sisters in Christ. So receive this blessing, Church, Christian:

"May the LORD bless you
and keep you;
may the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face to you
and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26, NIV)

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RENEWED // WEEK 2

Online **Connect** **Groups** **Questions**

Coming Together: Part 2 // Ephesians 4:1-6 // June 28, 2020

Introduction

Welcome to the second week of RENEWED!

This summer, we plan to **come together to know Jesus, be more like Him and help others do the same**. On Sunday, we focused on the first part of that statement: **come together**.

Ryan challenged us to think about what kind of people we're becoming and the character of our gatherings. The church is a people, not a place and when we gather on Sundays or throughout the week our gathering should increasingly look like Christ himself. This week in your groups, spend some time thinking through how our community moves toward reflecting Christ.

Getting to Know Each Other *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

Begin your group time by learning more about each other. Open up, and have some fun!

→ What's your favorite summertime activity?

→ What's a movie that you have watched over and over again? Why?

→ What are some ways in which you have experienced God's love for you? How has He brought about good in your life?

Getting Started

Begin to transition into group discussion.

1) Invite someone to open the group in prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For God to reveal His truth and love for the group
    b. For openness to each other and to God's voice
    c. For friendships to deepen and grow

2) Invite someone else to read Ephesians 4:1-6 to the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

Please complete these questions before your group meets.

1) **Read Ephesians 4:1-2.** The first half of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) is a reminder of what Christ has done for us and who we are in Him. In chapter 4, Paul begins to explain how we're to live out of the new life Christ has given us.

   How does the rest of this passage help us understand what Paul meant by walking (living) in a manner worthy of our calling?

2) In verse 2, Paul mentions four qualities that characterize those who are walking in a manner worth of their calling: humility, gentleness, patience and love.

- Humility is seeing myself in a proper light – as one who is entirely dependent on God. In order to have humility, empowered by the Spirit, we must renounce self-centeredness.
- Gentleness is being kind, careful and strong in the midst of chaotic division and anger. In order to have gentleness, empowered by the Spirit, we must renounce harshness and violence.
- Patience is endurance - the ability to wait out something tedious without getting upset. In order to have patience, empowered by the Spirit, we must renounce the tyranny of our own agendas.
- Love is a willful inclination (choice) to act for the good of another. In order to have love, empowered by the Spirit, we must renounce our rights.

a. Which of the above qualities comes easiest for you? If you're willing, share how this plays out in your life.

b. Which of the above qualities is hardest for you to live out of? How come?

3) Read verses 1-6 again. Paul mentions one more thing in verse 3 that is crucial to coming together as believers. He says to "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Paul indicates that we're already one in Christ. He doesn't say to *become unified* - he says to *preserve the unity* that *already exists* in Christ.

a. Consider a follower of Jesus with whom you struggle to live in unity.

b. Does it change your thoughts about this person if you view them as one with you in Christ? If so, how?

4) According to this passage, “walking in a manner worth of your calling” is walking (living) in a way that promotes community and unity in the body of Christ. We’re tempted to think that Paul is telling us to live out these qualities (humility, gentleness, patience, love) in our individual lives, yet Paul emphasizes the need for relationships that preserve unity.

    a. Has living in community been helpful to your growth in Christ? If so, how?

    b. Has your experience of living in community with others made it challenging to grow in Christ? If so, how?

    c. What’s one thing you can do this week to begin “walking in a manner worthy of your calling” in one of these areas (humility, gentleness, patience, love, unity)? If you’d like, share with your group and ask them to pray for you.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 10 min)*

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. Consider the areas you need to grow, receive help or show love.

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sharing can be scary, but it also invites others to be present in your life!