Better Together
"Life Together"
Ephesians 4:1-6
Pastor Cathy Burkholder
October 10-11, 2015

This weekend we studied Ephesians 4:1-6. As we open this chapter, we move from an incredible exploration of who God is and the way He works into a detailed account of who we are and the way we work. The Apostle Paul has taken his time communicating this essential message: that we were once alienated from God but now are His beloved children, accepted because of God's goodness and grace. Paul knows that if this message doesn't become who we are, deep in our hearts, we won't feel motivated to live out the calling we have received. The first three chapters of this letter tell us whose we are and the final three chapters show us the new way of life that lines up with that reality.

Now, in chapter 4, the Apostle Paul moves into challenging us to live in our new reality. We are to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. The way we live our lives, minute by minute, at home, work, and school, actually matters. Living worthy doesn't mean we need to try to earn our place in God's favor because these verses are not a list of do's and don'ts. Paul is simply showing us the only way of life that lines up with who we are. This frees us up from a horrible misunderstanding of what our calling is. It sets us free to live out who we are, which is founded in who Jesus is and the life He has called us to live.

Paul gives us the basis of our unity and how we might live life "better together". He tells us that believers in Christ share one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God and Father. Paul is reminding us that we have a lot in common and our commonalities are much more important than our differences. As we reflect on our commonalities and ask God to help us live in humility, gentleness, patience, and love, we will maintain the unity that God has given the church.

<u>Warm it up</u>
Do you tend to be more social, or more reserved? Do you recharge your batteries by being with other people, or by being alone?

How are you when it comes to dealing with people that annoy you? How do you keep on caring for a person who doesn't like you?

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

<u>Talk it over</u>

1. Reading between the lines, what problems do you think Paul was concerned about in Ephesus?
2. What qualities ought to characterize "a life worthy of the calling"?
3. 'Calling' is a strong concept that Paul spoke at lot about at the beginning of the letter. Glance through Ephesians 1:1-4. Who is called? Why so? What are they called to?
4. What happens when believers live out these qualities?
5. How do each of the four qualities listed in verse 2 promote unity? How do these characteristics contribute to the calling discussed in question 3?

6. How many times does Paul state the word 'one' in Ephesians 4:4-6? What is significant about this number?

Work it out

7. Which of those characteristics is most representative of you? Explain.
8. Which one do you need to grow in the most? Why?
9. How does viewing God as Father (not just as Creator or Judge) add to our unity?
10. What are some of the "cheap substitutes" we often offer to God in the place of real unity?

Going Deeper

11. In studying this lesson, what action steps with what people do you need to implement in the days ahead?
12. Beyond these specific relationships, what can you do at CPC to promote peace and unity?
13. Anything else you think the Lord may be saying to you or to your group through this text?

Think of a specific person that you need to show humility, gentleness, patience, or love to this week. Pray for them each day and ask God for His strength to live worthy of what He's called you to. Find practical ways to reach out to that person this week.

Memory verse:

Ephesians 4:1-2 NIV:
As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Resources:

Life Together, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community, by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis

Connected; My Life in the Church, by Thom Rainer