The Bond of Peace – Unity in the Spirit

Alicia Bruxvoort

BIG IDEA

Flourishing happens when we live as one through the Spirit, choosing humility, patience, and love over personal preferences.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Ephesians 1:3-14; 19-20, Ephesians 2:1-5;11-22, Ephesians 4:1-6; 11-16, John 17:20-23, 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8

1. In Ephesians 4:1-3. Paul tells believers to be humble, gentle, patient, and to bear with one another in love. Compare these characteristics with the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Which of these qualities do you think is most important for building unity? Which is most difficult for you to practice? Why?

2. Read Ephesians 1:19-20, 3:20 and 4:16 and consider this; Paul uses the same word, energeia, for the power that builds up the body and the power that raised Christ from the dead How often do you rely on that power to help you live in unity with others? Have you ever felt tired of "trying" to love difficult people? What would it look like to "make every effort" while depending fully on the Spirit's power? Why aren't effort and dependence opposites?

3. Read Ephesians 4:4-6 What do you notice about the things Paul says we have in common? Where do you see people confusing unity with uniformity–in the church or in your own relationships? What are some differences we need to learn to embrace rather than eliminate?

4. "Church isn't a place to go; it's a people who help us grow." Think about attending vs. belonging, and consuming vs. contributing. Where would you honestly put yourself right now? Who has helped you grow? Is there a gift or contribution you've been holding back from the body?

5. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. According to this passage, what is Jesus' vision for how the church grows? What do you notice about the role each person plays in the growth of the body? What does this suggest about our responsibility to one another?

6. Sharing life instead of merely sharing space can feel messy. Why can it be difficult to let others see what is really happening in our lives? What helps create the kind of community where people feel safe enough to be known?

7. Take a pulse check. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. Paul measured that church by its love. Who knows what you're really carrying right now? Whose burden do you know about? If you stopped coming, who would notice and call? What would it take for our church to have a stronger pulse?