

GROUP GUIDE

SCRIPTURE TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:1-16 - PRE-GROUP

STUDY

Before interacting with this guide, all leaders and group members should study the referenced text using the HEAR Method.

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.

Study Question:

1. What are the character traits that Paul mentions in v.1-3 that are necessary in order to walk in a manner worthy of our calling?
2. Everyone has been given a gift for the building of Christ's body. What is yours?
*** If you do not know your spiritual gifts, you can take an assessment here:
<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service> ***
1. Paul says that a church walking in unity and using its gifts builds mature believers. What are some of the signs of a mature believer?

Group Lesson

Main Idea:

We are one. Though we may be from different backgrounds, and meet at different times, with different worship styles, and in different locations, we are one church and we are called to walk in unity.

Introduction:

Have you ever noticed that on every American dollar is the inscription, "E pluribus unum?"

The motto means "out of many, one." Out of many different states and many different people comes one nation.

The motto challenges us to realize that our strength as a nation comes when different people from different backgrounds join together for one common purpose. Unity in mission and vision, not uniformity in appearance, is the foundation of the American ideal.

The same is true of the church. We are many, many different people, many different ages, many different races, many different backgrounds. However, we are joined together under one Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and one calling, taking Jesus Christ to the Upstate and the world.

Understanding

Read: Ephesians 4:1-16

One Bible scholar says of this passage, “No passage is more descriptive of the church in action.” In other words, what we have here is a picture of a healthy church.

One of the main traits of a healthy church that is obvious from the passage is unity.

Unity: the state of being united or joined as a whole.

Healthy unity is not an artificial or forced unity. Healthy unity is not uniformity that minimizes diversity or differences. Healthy unity is when multiple people are made one because of a common relationship or purpose. It’s a unity built on a common foundation.

We are unified by the same calling. (V.1)

Paul urges believers to walk worthy of the calling which they received. The calling that we’ve all received is the calling of salvation and the calling to live to tell the world about our Savior.

The foundation of Christian unity is our common relationship to Jesus Christ and our common mission for Jesus.

How does our relationship with Jesus and our mission for Jesus unite us together despite our differences?

How does disunity distract us from the mission that Jesus has called us to? What are some examples you have seen about how disunity has prevented the mission from going forward?

We are unified by the same beliefs (V. 4-6)

Paul also builds a case for the church's unity around the common beliefs.

What are some of the beliefs that he lists that are the foundation of our unity?

The beliefs that Paul lists are the core beliefs of the Christian faith. They give us unity about the most foundational things in life.

How do common foundational beliefs give us unity with someone even if we have nothing else in common with them?

Everyone has something to contribute. (V.7-12)

The church is one, but it's made up of many different parts, many different people. Paul wants every believer to know that they have something to contribute to the church and its mission.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Unity is not possible without everyone contributing.
Passivity kills unity because it keeps everyone from answering the call of Christ.
Unity comes when everyone participates with the same purpose.

Application

If we are going to be a unified church, we are going to have to live like Jesus.

Read Ephesians 4:1-3 again. What are some of the character traits that Paul says we need if we are to walk in unity? Who is a good example of someone who embodies these characteristics?

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. Have I been walking “eager to maintain unity” in the church?
2. Is there a place in the church that I am being called to contribute that I haven’t yet?
3. Have I been guilty of placing personal preference over unity in purpose?

Prayer

Close your group in prayer. Ask God to make us a church that walks in unity and pursues his mission with passion.

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SCRIPTURE TEXT: ISAIAH 6:1-8 - PRE-GROUP

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A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.

Study Question:

1. What are some of the main things you notice about God in this text? How does it move you to worship?
2. What does Isaiah's response to seeing God in his holiness teach us about ourselves?
3. God removes Isaiah's sin. What does that teach us about the gospel?
4. In response to God's mercy, Isaiah is eager to minister. Has this been true in your own life in response to God's mercy?

Group Lesson

Main Idea:

When people meet God and are forgiven by God they become passionate about being used by God.

Introduction:

I once read a story about Kobe Bryant's passion for basketball. Evidently, his love of the game made him do some pretty obsessive things, like show up to practice at 4 A.M. and make teammates play one-on-one games to 100.

I was struck by how passion leads to a desire to act, to work, to be "in the game" so to speak.

Who is the most passionate person you know? What are they passionate about?

How does it show up in their life?

Passion leads to action. There is no way around it. God is calling our church to be passionate people who act for His glory.

When it comes to scripture, we see an example of this passion in the prophet Isaiah.

Understanding

Read: Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah shows us that the foundation for Christian passion and Christian action is the glory of God and the grace of God. When people see God's glory and God's grace, they become passionate to live lives sold out for Him.

Isaiah had an experience with God that few people ever have this side of heaven. He saw God in all his glory.

What are some of the attributes of God that Isaiah lists?

The main attribute that Isaiah relays to us is God's holiness.

That God is holy means that he is completely set apart from us, completely different than us. This doesn't mean that he is unknowable to us. It means that he is not like us. He is pure and we are not. He is sinless and we are not. He is good and we are not. He is whole and we are not.

The most important take away from Isaiah's description of God is that we serve a big God. God cannot be reduced to deserving only a part of our life.

This God that Isaiah describes is worthy of the entirety of our lives.

When we settle for a small idea of God, we are content to give Him the bits and pieces of our lives. Isaiah will not let us settle for such an understanding of God.

In what ways have you settled for a small view of God? How has that impacted your passion for God?

In what ways does this passage move you to worship God? How does worship make us passionate about being used for Jesus?

God's glory moves us to live lives centered around Him.

When we see who God is, our prayer becomes, "God, use me."

Isaiah not only experienced God's glory. He experienced God's grace in a radical way. Notice Isaiah's response to God's glory in v. 5. Why do you think his response is so dramatic?

Isaiah is convinced that he is about to die because he is a sinful man in the presence of God. Yet, God does the unimaginable. He takes his sins away. In Isaiah we have a perfect illustration of the gospel. A sinful man stands before a holy God. Then, the holy God does what the sinful man could never do for himself. He takes away his sin. This is God's grace.

"When we understand the character of God, when we grasp something of His holiness, then we begin to understand the radical character of our sin and hopelessness. Helpless sinners can survive only by grace. Our strength is futile in itself; we are spiritually impotent without the assistance of a merciful God. The hands of God are gracious hands.

They alone have the power to rescue us from certain destruction." -RC. Sproul

God's grace moves us to live lives centered around him.

When we see how God loves us, our prayer becomes, "God, use me."

Read Isaiah 6:8.

All of this results in Isaiah longing to be used by God. People who have encountered God's glory and God's grace long to be used for God's mission.

Application

Read Acts 20:22-24

What does Paul consider his main goal in life? How can we make our main goal in life living for Christ's mission?

-C.T. Studd

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. Can I honestly say that I want God to use me?
2. Have I been more concerned about what I can get from God instead of how I can serve God?
3. Have I ever experienced God's grace and glory like Isaiah?

Prayer

Close the group in prayer focusing on the reality that we all only have one life to give Christ.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: MARK 2:1-12 - PRE-GROUP

STUDY

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R: Respond to God in prayer.

Study Question:

1. In this passage four friends are passionate about bringing their friend to Jesus for healing. Who are the people in your life that God intends for you to bring to Jesus?
2. What does this passage teach about Jesus and his authority?
3. The friends and the paralytic were seeking physical healing. How did Jesus meet their expectations and go past them?

Group Lesson

Main Idea:

Knowing Jesus, and knowing what he has done for us, leads us to be passionate about bringing other people to know Jesus.

Introduction:

When is the last time you had a conversation about Jesus with someone who was not a church member? Chances are it's been a while. Although Christianity is a faith that was built on Christians going into a hostile world and telling others about Jesus, it would appear that the practice of evangelism is a way of the past for many Christians.

One recent study among churchgoers (people who attend church one or more times a month) showed that 80% believed that it was a Christian mandate to share their faith. Nevertheless 61% of those surveyed had not shared their faith in the past 6 months.

What does this mean? It means we have an evangelism problem. We have the best news in all the world and churches full of people who don't talk about it.

At the end of the day, the biggest obstacle to evangelism is Christians who don't share the gospel. – Albert Mohler

Understanding

Read: Mark 2:1-12

Isn't it funny how Jesus offers so much more than what these five men were looking for? The four friends and the handicapped man came to Jesus looking for some physical healing, which isn't a bad thing. They just had no idea that Jesus offers so much more.

Instead of Jesus healing this man's physical ailment only, he says, "your sins are forgiven."

Why do you think that he does that?

Ultimately, Jesus is here to show everyone involved that He has come to not just fix the external. He has come to make all things new, and that starts with forgiveness of sins, not the mending of bones.

The handicapped man had a need bigger than physical healing and he didn't even know it. How do we show people that their biggest need in life is God's forgiveness?

Jesus' offer of forgiveness and eternal life becomes clear in this passage. What may go unnoticed is our obligation to those in need of what Jesus offers. Our obligation is summed up by the handicapped man's four friends. These four men had every reason to give up on their mission. The house was full. There was no way they were getting to Jesus. They didn't give up. They resulted to a little destruction of property and did whatever it took to get people to Jesus.

What do these four men show us that our obligation is to people who need Jesus?

Read Romans 1:14-15

Paul says that he is obligated to preach the gospel. Why is he obligated? Because he has the good news that everyone else needs.

The obligation Paul has in mind is of a doctor to a sick person. The doctor is obligated to seek the cure that the patient needs. Those of us who have the gospel are spiritual doctors. Those without Jesus are the spiritually sick. We have the cure, and we are obligated to give it to them.

Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

- Charles Spurgeon

Application

Part of the ONE initiative is everyone picking one person to pray for and commit to telling about Jesus. WHO'S YOUR ONE?

What is it that keeps you from sharing the gospel more faithfully?

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. Have I been complacent about telling people about Jesus and his salvation?
2. When is the last time that I prayed for someone who is lost?
3. When is the last time I told someone about Jesus?

Prayer

Close the group in prayer asking God to break our hearts for the lost people in our lives.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.