

the ESSENTIALS

why truth matters

OPENING UP



What slang words/phrases were popular when you were younger? How have they changed over the years?

TEXT

I Believe in the holy Universal Church| Ephesians 4:1-16

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Big Idea: God's church is where God's people grow in God's image.

Key Question: What does God do in the church?

Apostles' Creed Statement: *“I believe in...the holy catholic [universal] Church, the communion of saints.”*

1. God's church is where He unites His body (vv. 1-6)
2. God's church is where He builds up His body (vv. 7-13)
3. God's church is where He grows His body (vv. 14-16)

DISCUSSION



- The message this week addressed the following line from the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in...the holy Catholic [Universal] Church." Discuss the difference between the universal Church and the local church. Why do you think it's important for Christians to be members of a local church? How does it encourage you to remember that you are part of the universal church?
- Since they are united by One faith in One God, Paul encourages the body of believers (the universal church) to live in unity with one another (vv.1-6). How have you experienced unity in the church either currently or in the past? As part of the church, what can you do to foster unity where there may be division?
- God created each member of the church to be unique and different, contributing their gifts and talents to aid in building up of the church (vv. 7-13). Take a few minutes to name specific gifts and talents you see in each other as group members. How are you using the things shared to build up the body of Christ? What about Spiritual Gifts? Do you know what your Spiritual Gifts are? Who can you seek help from to discover and deploy your gifts?
- Spiritual growth can feel like it relies solely on each individual believer. Yet Paul shows us in Ephesians 4:14-16, how the church works together to help one another grow in faith and spiritual maturity. How have you grown because of your involvement with our local church? How can you help others grow through the church?
- *God's church is where God's people grow in God's image.* How can the church reflect the image of God to the world better than an individual believer can? How have you seen God's character reflected through the church?

LIFE CHALLENGE



One God, One faith, One Hope, One body united by the grace and saving work of Jesus. As believers, we have the privilege of doing life together and helping one another grow in faith and spiritual maturity. Together we can better reflect God's image and show His love and grace to a lonely world.

God has given us each a unique set of gifts and talents. Take a moment to individual write down the gifts and talents that God has given to you. Now, read through your list and reflect upon whether or not you are using each thing written to help unite, build up, and/or grow the local church. Write down one step you will take this week to use your gifts to serve someone or a ministry at church.

CLOSING PRAYER



God, thank you for uniting your people through the work of your son, Jesus. Thank you for the gifts and talents you have given to us through your Spirit. Helps us to live in unity with one another and to use the things you have given us to build up and grow Your Church! Father, give us eyes to see how we can best serve you and one another this week. Amen.