

Ephesians Study 6

Prayer: Open my eyes to living out your calling, even in this next hour, this very day.

“God’s word to us is inherently a call, an invitation, a welcome into HIS presence (two book?) and action (missional?)” Eugene Peterson, *Practicing Resurrection*

All of what Paul outlined in the first 3 chapters is now put into shape to us through our “calling.” A comprehensive, whole-being understanding of what we are to be about. Paul enlarged our vision of what it is that God does in Chapters 1-3 and then in 4-6 he shows us how we can live our calling out – how we can imagine and then participate with this new vision in our real lives.

Reading and Reflection

Read Ephesians 4: 1-16

What elements does Paul outline that comprise our calling? (vs.1-5) Write them out and next to each, write how these things embody God’s work?

How can we “bear one another in love”?

When is bearing in love very hard for you? When has it been hard in a real situation in your life? Where was God present in that situation?

Describe unity as you understand it. How does “manifold wisdom” illuminate our understanding of unity?

What threatens God’s kind of unity in your community—in our community?
In what real ways can we maintain and guard this unity of diverse people?

NT Wright from Ephesians

“It may be hard for Christians today to grasp just how central this unity was to Paul’s vision of the church. We have grown accustomed to so many divisions within the worldwide church. Sometimes customs and practices have grown up in churches which are so different that members of one have difficulty recognizing members of another as fellow Christians. Sometimes, indeed, the boundaries are blurred, and it may be possible for a church to wander off course so much that its claim to be loyal to the work and person of Jesus Christ is seriously called into question.

But whatever position we take, the one thing we can’t do is to pretend that this isn’t a central and vital issue. Unless we are working to maintain, and develop the unity we already enjoy and to overcome, demolish and put behind us the disunity we still find ourselves in, we can scarcely claim to be following Paul’s teaching.”

What is the hope that goes with our call?

What is the diversity in the unity that Paul sees? (vs. 7-16)

What are the gifts given? Why are they given? What should the result of any gift be? (Maturity in people? Unity in a group? Individuals united to God and to each other?)

Responding to the Text

Where does your/our church need to grow into maturity?

How can you use your gifts and your insight towards this goal? What emotions arise as you ponder this? What might they be telling you today?