



GRACE GROUP LEADER'S MESSAGE GUIDE

Series: How to Church

Title: Community

Text: Ephesians 4:1-16, 1 Peter 5:5, Titus 2:4

Leader note: This Message Guide is intended to help you facilitate discussion with your Grace Group. You can use the guide exactly as it is, ignore some of it, or add to it. We hope you view this guide as a flexible teaching tool, and not a rigid teaching task.

Development & Announcements

- Remember the Prayer theme for this year. Pray for group life in general and your group members by name each week. I have attached a Prayer resource at the end of this guide.
- Also know that we are planning to have a group leader prayer time on the 2nd Sunday of each month in the upstairs portion of The Venue building. This prayer time will be from 8am - 8:45am and all group leaders, apprentices and hosts are invited to come. We will pray for group life in general, specific groups and issues raised from group leaders. No RSVP needed, just show up.
- Baptism registrations are open for the November baptism; www.gracefellowship.cc/baptism.

Welcome & Icebreaker

What is your favorite team sport and why?

Biblical Context

The author identifies himself as Paul. Some have taken the absence of the usual personal greetings and the verbal similarity of many parts to Colossians, among other reasons, as grounds for doubting authorship by the apostle Paul. However, this was probably a circular letter, intended for other churches in addition to the one in Ephesus. Paul may have written it about the same time as Colossians, c. a.d. 60, while he was in prison at Rome. Unlike several of the other letters Paul wrote, Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church. The letter opens with a sequence of statements about God's blessings, which are interspersed with a remarkable variety of expressions drawing attention to God's wisdom, forethought and purpose. Paul emphasizes that we have been saved, not only for our personal benefit, but also to bring praise and glory to God. The climax of God's purpose, "when the times will have reached their fulfillment," is to bring all things in the universe together under Christ. It is crucially important that Christians realize this, so in chapter 1:15-23 Paul prays for their understanding. (biblica.com)

Sermon Review

1. What stood out to you in the message?
2. How might what we learned in the message change the way we live?

Initial Question

1. What do you think is your greatest gift?

Looking At the Text

1. In Ephesians 4:2, what is God's purpose in giving these gifts to His people?
2. In verses 4 and 5, Paul notes one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God. Why was it important for him to note that there were one of each of those? (*leader note: describes that which is united as one in contrast to that which is divided or consisting of separate parts. Beginning with the first believers at Pentecost in Acts 2 and continuing through to the last believers preceding the Rapture of the Church, there is only one body of true believers, with no class, racial, cultural, national or language differences. See also Romans 12:5, preceptaustin.com*)
3. Verses 12 and 13 are specifically mentioned to give believers a goal. What is mentioned as the goal? What is "work of ministry" and what does it mean to "build up the body of Christ"?

Digging Deeper

1. Read 1 Peter 5:5. (also see Colossians 3:12, Proverbs 3:34) This also describes a portion of the relationship we have within the church, younger believer vs. authority of the elder. Peter references Proverbs 3:34 to show that this choice to be humble toward each other is not just about human relationships. God's natural response to proud humans is to oppose them, just as His natural response to humble humans is to give them grace. Discuss God given gifts and humility vs. being proud.
2. Read Titus 2:4. Again, Paul is describing a relationship between older and younger women within the church body. (*leader note: Paul's instructions to "older women" began in verse 3, and continue here. Verse 3 gives instructions to "train the young women," or to "encourage" them. In that time and place, "older women" would have been those around 40 years old and over. These women were usually already married, had raised children, and had ample experience to pass on to younger women. This experience was important, given the immoral culture in which younger women of Crete were immersed (Titus 1:12). The focus of younger women was to be their immediate family. In contrast with the wild living of Crete's non-believers, a young Christian woman was to live faithfully to her husband, showing love to him and to her children (Proverbs 31:11). The theme of how husbands and wives are to treat one another is also discussed by Paul in Ephesians 5:22–33. Wives are meant*

to respect their husbands, and husbands are to love their wives as themselves. bibleref.com) The human need for community isn't a new thing or new need in our current society. Grace Groups are biblical! Describe Paul's wisdom in pointing out the need for these relationships.

Life Application

1. In the first several verses of Ephesians 4:1-6, there are several gifts noted. Know that people are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? Are you using these God given gifts to represent Him well?
2. Unity is mentioned in verse 3. Unity sometimes is not achieved outside the church because of the differences in people's gifts and beliefs, but inside the church, the different gifts are for the same purpose. Describe how the thought of unity means to you.
3. In the weekend message it was said to "let people in." How well do you think you do that? Why is it important as we look at it through the lens of our faith journey?

Action Step

The action step for this past weekend's message was to go get into a group in order to have Christian community. Since you are already in a group, how can you increase your participation in that group? Could you become an apprentice leader? Could you help your leader as the Local Impact Coordinator? Maybe you could coordinate the childcare for your group?

Prayer, Care and Community

Remember that this group season (now until May) we have themed as a focus on Prayer. So, please make prayer an important part of your group life. See the resource on prayer on the next pages.

A Guide to Effective Daily Prayer

Effective prayer cannot be reduced to a magic formula. God does not respond to our requests because we have the right ritual. He is more interested in our hearts than in our words. John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

God's Word does, however, give us certain basic elements that, when included in our communication with God, will enable us to receive His answers to our prayers. In this lesson we will consider a simple guide that you can use in your daily devotional time. The guide can easily be remembered by the first letter of each word: ACTS:

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

Adoration

1. Why should we praise God? (Jeremiah 32:17, I John 4:10, Philippians 1:6)
2. What is the best way for you to show your gratitude toward God, and your faith and trust in Him in all circumstances? (Philippians 4:6) What would you conclude that God expects of us? (I Thessalonians 5:16-18)
3. How do you communicate your adoration to God?

Confession

1. Read Isaiah 59:1-2. What will hinder fellowship with God?
2. Psalm 51 was David's prayer after he had fallen out of fellowship with God. What did David conclude that God wanted of Him? (Psalm 51:6,16-17)
3. Read Psalm 32:1-7. What was David's observation about confession? What was his observation about not confessing his sin? (Verses 3 & 4)
4. What should you do when you find that your fellowship with God is broken? (I John 1:9) What sin in your life is keeping you from fellowship with God? How do you deal with that sin?

Thanksgiving

1. Let us never be guilty of being ungrateful to God. How often should we give thanks? (Hebrews 13:15) For what should we praise Him? (Ephesians 5:20) Why? (I Thessalonians 5:18)
2. What about a situation that seems adverse? (Romans 5:3-4)
3. How do you practice thankfulness when you pray? As you go about your daily life?
4. Make a list of each problem, disappointment, heartache, or adversity that concerns you. Begin to thank God for each one. Doing so demonstrates your trust in Him.

Supplication

1. Intercession. An example of intercession is provided in Colossians 1:3. What was Paul's prayer for the Christians of Colossae?
2. Many times our efforts in leading people to Christ are fruitless because we forget the necessary preparation for witnessing. The divine order is to first talk to God about men, and then talk to men about God. If we follow this order, we will see results. Prayer really is the place where people are won to Christ; witnessing is just gathering in the results of prayer. As you meditate on the above, list the requests you can make to God for Christians and non-Christians.
3. Petition. Why should we expect God to answer our prayers? (Matthew 7:9-11, Romans 8:32)
4. According to Psalm 84:11-12, what has God promised to do?
5. What part does belief have in our prayers? (Mark 11:24, James 1:6-7)
6. Faith is necessary, what else? (Matthew 6:9-10, I John 5:14-15)
7. Why will God not answer some prayers? (James 4:3) How does this relate to your prayer life?
8. Explain II Corinthians 12:7-10 in light of Romans 8:28. What does this teach us about apparently unanswered prayer?

Life Application

1. Add other requests to the prayer list you began at the end of Lesson 1.
2. Begin using the ACTS system for prayer during your daily time alone with God. Note here how your prayers have changed.
3. List daily situations in which you could use praise and thanksgiving to help you react in a godly manner.

Adapted from The 10 Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity, by Bill Bright, co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. © Cru. All rights reserved.