

The Beginning of a New Year

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Many years ago, when I worked with Weis Markets, they made store managers take classes through Dale Carnegie. Dale Carnegie was a teacher for business leaders and leaders in general. He had started a school and it became famous. He wrote a couple of books that became famous in the business world: *How to Win Friends and Influence people* / *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*. In the first book, Dale Carnegie uses a quote from Harvey Firestone, founder of Firestone Tire and Rubber, which goes like this, "I have never found that pay and pay alone would either bring together or hold good people. I think it was the game itself. (Dale Carnegie, 186). Harvey Firestone was stating that pay alone does not satisfy an employee. It may help, but it can't work alone. There has to be more to drive a worker to do good work. That is usually work conditions. When I worked for Weis Markets, I was sent one time to a store that had union activity and I was asked to try to stop it. The workers there never mentioned about a pay raise. It was the working conditions of that store they had issues with. We fixed the working conditions and the union activity died off. That store had no unity, so they tried to form unity through the union. With a church, it's different. It's impossible to run a church in a tight business model. You'll find that dealing with the Spirit of God adds a totally different dimension within a church. If the Spirit of God is not the main dimension, that church will fail to be the church that Jesus requires and let's remember, Jesus is the one who died for His Church (Eph. 5: 25 – 30). We found out last week how important it is to pray for each other in Ephesians 3. Apostle Paul told us through the Spirit that we need to pray for inner strength, for stronger faith, for growing love, and to be filled with the power of God for each other. Paul wanted the Church to have deep growing roots into Jesus who supplies the nutrients for a Church to be healthy Spiritually. This is our focus for this year – pray for each other. It's an area we can all improve on. However, we also have to understand that Paul didn't finish with just prayer. In Ephesians, Paul will continue and we find that this example of prayer we talked about last week is needed to accomplish something else that is needed for the Church to be healthy.

Let's turn to Ephesians 4: 1 – 16 where we read this, "4 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."^[a]

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?^[b] 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^[c] and teachers,^[d] 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,^[e] 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. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

There is a lot we can dig into in this piece of Scripture, but we're going to focus on only a couple of things. First, Paul tells us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which we've been called in verse 1. As we look back on the past year, we have tried to do the Lord's work and this is what Paul wanted the Church to do. We've done this through VBS (sharing Gospel message to children), Griefshare, and helping people with gift cards for food. We helped one family with renting a U-Haul and gas. We made and gave the Hanover Fire Company care kits for those effected by house fires. We gave 27 cases of water to the Hanover Fire Company during the Summer for the firefighters to use. We helped True North Autism school with school supplies this year. We just got done with collecting Legos and Lincoln Logs for the children so they can learn building skills. We then can talk about NMI and how we met all our goals in supporting Missions. We had the Stouts from New Zealand to speak and we supported our sponsor child in Africa. We were faithful to missions this year. I would like to thank Bonnie for being NMI

president. I would like to thank Patty for her hard work as treasurer. I would like to thank Karen for being board secretary. I would like to thank everyone who has been part of the team in serving the Lord, either through music, helping decorate, count money, remove snow, help with receptions after a funeral, and any other item no matter how big or small. I would like to thank the Church board for their dedication for coming to the board meetings and being great to work with. We do all this because Jesus has given us command which is: Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age (NLT). So, most of all, I would like to thank the Lord for His faithfulness that is unmatched. Even though we have gone through some tough times, the Lord has been there and has carried us through the storms. The Lord is good. I just gave you the year end church report. Can there be room for improvement? Yes, and there's nothing to be ashamed about that. We had talked last week how we are to pray for one another and Paul gave us an example of prayer that we looked over. Paul was leading into something bigger.

In chapter four, we see that Paul started out with a "therefore". In other words, chapter 4 is a continuation of chapter 3. So, Paul tells the Church how to pray for each other, now he goes into why. We pray for each other not only because we care for each other out of Holy love, but Paul adds in verse 3 we pray for spiritual development for each other because we are eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. I looked up AI definition of unity and it means being in full agreement or harmony. To see an example of this is hard in the world we live in, but the Church is supposed to be the example of real harmony. The problem is it's usually the opposite. The human nature likes to put other people down because it builds up the ego. So, people usually try to find things wrong with other people to make themselves feel good about themselves. This is why we pray for each other for Spiritual development through the Spirit so that the Spirit can control our human nature that likes to do the opposite of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16 – 26). The human nature that is not controlled by the Holy Spirit likes to cause division. Paul didn't want the Church to focus on division, but to focus on doing the work of the Lord and to support one another in prayer instead. We need to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit within us because His Spirit is the

unifier. The Spirit bonds us in peace. His Spirit is the glue for the Church. We all have the same Spirit within us and when we pray for each of us to be filled with the Spirit, it also means we are praying that we are united into one through the same Spirit. This is why Paul uses “one” several times in verses 4 – 6. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one God, one hope, one faith, and one baptism. In fact, Paul states in verse 6, “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (NIV). We serve the same Lord and we have the same Spirit within us. The Lord wants us to be united together. In fact, I’ll go so far and say we should be united like the Trinity is united – The Father, Son, Holy Spirit. However, the Lord knows how wicked the human heart is (Jeremiah 17: 9 – 10) and how the human nature works, so He sent His Spirit into us to help us to be united as one.

We want this unity through the Spirit because Paul tells us in verses 12 and 13, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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. (ESV)” When we pray for each other for the filling of the Spirit and for spiritual growth, it will lead to the next step – unity as a group of believers. We pray for each other so we can all be equipped for the works of service for Jesus as a group of believers. We pray so that our faith grows to the point where we are all one with Jesus. So, praying for each other leads to a bigger picture.

Then we can get to the final step through prayer. Paul tells the Church this in verses 15 – 16, “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (NIV). Not only do we become unified together through the Spirit, but we all become unified as one in Jesus, who is the head of the Church. Now, Paul is going back to what he told us back in chapter three that we pray that we are rooted in Jesus. Remember, we used Colossians 2: 7 as a supporting verse, “Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done (NLT, 1903)” When we pray for each other as Paul taught us in chapter 3, we see in chapter 4 we become unified and grow together into Jesus Christ – we all become one in Christ. This is the ultimate goal for a church. We should all

want this for this church. God's Word has given us the answer for a healthy church and we don't need to buy several human books to find another answer. I received a Christian magazine last week in the mail and it's mainly for pastors. It's filled with what churches are doing to try to grow and they give you examples of how to merchandize your church. The Lord has given us the blueprint on how to have a healthy church. The problem is with us – we just don't put it into practice. Maybe we think it's too old fashion. I don't know, but it seems to me what Paul tells does make good sense for the Church today. So, let's pray for each other so that we can grow in our faith through the power of God and then we can start to become unified as one in Jesus and we can work together in complete harmony as Jesus wants us to.

Carnegie, Dale: *Dale Carnegie – A Combined Edition*. Dale Carnegie & Associates, 1984

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996