

**Ephesians:
God's New Family**

Date	Weekly Theme	
January 7	Ephesians 1	<i>All things belong to God</i>
January 14	Ephesians 2	<i>Radical Grace - People made for a purpose</i>
January 21	Ephesians 3	<i>The Servant Family</i>
January 28	Ephesians 4:1-24	<i>Family Unity</i>
February 4	Ephesians 4:25-6:9	<i>Living a new life</i>
February 11	Ephesians 6:10-24	<i>Family Armor</i>

Small Group Time

Take time to greet each other, share names if necessary, and share your highs, lows, and prayer concerns. Then take time to pray for one another.

Read the text aloud – **Ephesians 4:1-24** (Differing versions if possible)

What did you hear?

What, if anything, caught your attention?

How does the overall message impact you?

Questions and Review from last week's discussion.

How is God accomplishing his purposes for the world through you?

How can you be more engaged in this Good Work?

What is preventing you from engaging this baptismal call with joy?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Address the following questions:

What does the word "discipleship" mean to you?

How is discipleship an individual journey, and how is it communal?

- This week's study, "FAMILY UNITY," would perhaps be better titled, "RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP."
 - Paul exhorts the church to, "...live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (v.1).
 - It all goes back to that purpose thing we read about in chapter 2:10
 - "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
 - And so it is that each of us is an embarrassment of riches, gifted people, filled up with giftings and passions God has placed in each of us for the building up of the body.
 - In the context of the body, we are all given roles to play, ministries through which we are to participate in the work of the kingdom.
 - Gone are the days of professional ministers.
 - The church God has always had in mind is one where everyone is engaged in the work of the kingdom.
 - Kingdom work is *not* work for professionals.
 - Kingdom work is work for *disciples!*
 - Regular folks like you and I who...
 - Follow Jesus.
 - Love Jesus.
 - Love the world that Jesus loves.
 - Give to the world out of the abundance that Jesus gives to each of us.
 - Are caught up in the new life given to us through Jesus' own death and resurrection.
 - Folks who know that when God made us, when he claimed us, and even before all of that when he dreamed us, we were made with a plan, conceived in God's imagination, that is the shape of fulfillment and abundant life for each of us.
 - But this journey of discipleship, and the roles and gifts that come with it, is one that we have to grow into and *mature* in.
 - In the context of Lutheranism, we don't talk often enough of faith maturation; perhaps because our emphasis is so God centered.
 - Ironically, that is why I believe a faithful recovery of discipleship (e.g. growing with Jesus and maturing in faith) is so important.
 - Because it is simply an outgrowth of what God is doing in the midst of our lives, both as...
 - Individuals, and as...
 - Community.

Questions for Reflection

How are you growing as a disciple?

How is faith maturing in you and changing how you are in relationship to family, work, church community, neighbors, spouse, life?

What are the ways that you see that you need to mature in your life?

- Radical discipleship is discipleship that takes who we are and doesn't leave us that way. It's goal is transformation.
 - Paul writes, "...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."
 - Jesus does not intend to leave us as we are. He is taking us, clay vessels that we are, and shaping and forming us.
 - And his goal is not ultimately individual transformation, though this will occur in the process.
 - His goal is the transformation of the human community.
 - He has in mind for us to, "...attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ," –the entire human family.
 - So whoever had it in his or her mind that Christianity was an individual sport and not a team sport had it all wrong.
 - If you are attempting discipleship without a community, you are engaging in futility.
 - And if you are attempting discipleship without a community, you are in a sense doing violence to God's purposes for your life and that of the human family.
 - We need one another to be disciples!
 - We need one another to be what God has in mind for us to be!

<p>Reflective Moment</p> <p><i>Why do people opt out of community?</i></p>

- Radical discipleship is community discipleship.
- It's also the reason that people opt out of Christian community.
 - Paul writes, "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking truth in love, we will in all things grow up into 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." (v14-16)
 - Radical discipleship is discipleship and a lived faith that is *accountable* to others.
 - It is discipleship that is mutually interdependent upon others...discipleship where...
 - ...you rely on others, and...
 - ...others rely on you.
 - It is discipleship where it matters how you behave, what you do, what you value, and how you live.
 - It's discipleship that wants to take your old ways of thinking, behaving, and being, and put them to death.
- Radical discipleship is life-altering discipleship.

Questions and Processing

Closing Prayer

Question for the Soul

What is your ministry?