Tread: **A Study in Ephesians – wk 5 – The Us Factor**

**Before you can run – you must learn to walk – before you can walk you learn to stand. One does not come before the other!**

**This is Ephesians Ch 1-2 Where we stand in Jesus.**

**Ch 3-4 - how to walk it out. Ch 5-6 - how to run the race!**

**Back story – This is church in the city of Ephesus, a large port city. Paul started & lived there 3 yrs and wrote this while in a Roman prison.**

**Last few: our need for Jesus and where we stand** **as his child, chosen, adopted, forgiven, enlightened, empowered, heirs, saved, redeemed, included, and secure – today one more…**

**The first part of Ephesians Paul focused on You are… But now he transitions into – We are…**

**Ephesians 2:11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands) – (If you are not sure what circumcision is - I have a short video that explain it… blank… JK – ask your parents. Circumcision was a sign) 12 remember that at that time you (gentiles -us) were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.**

**What is a Gentile? To them it meant - the uncircumcised**

**Anyone who is not of racially Jewish decent - the circumcised**

**Israelites (Jewish people) saw themselves as superior to all. Chosen by God only - no one else could break into their group.**

**They misunderstood the promise of Abraham – to all nations.**

**We see this when Jesus walked the earth – there was hatred towards other races from Jewish people and leaders. Even a few apostles struggled with prejudice outside of their Jewish relationships.**

**Paul says, “…remember that formerly you who are Gentiles (us) were…” we were w/out a home, spiritual foreigners, w/out community, w/out promise, w/out peace, w/out hope and God**

**Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

**The cross equals the playing field for anyone and everyone.**

**14 For he (Jesus) himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, (How did he do this?) 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.**

**Jesus kicked down our barriers between God and the barriers between each other. He modeled it, then bore the aggression and hostility of it –**

**So that now - In Christ we are ONE**

**Eph 2:15b His purpose (the cross) was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, (harmony and peace to the animosity between people groups) 16 and in one body (His) to reconcile both of them (Jew and Gentile) to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.**

**The cross is harmony. What does this mean? 4 note harmony vs single notes – Keys. Together We are a song to the world! The US factor! Harmony is lived out is unity - We are ONE now.**

**Paul gives us Four-part Harmony!**

**1 - Racial harmony – it clearly says Jesus kicks the racial walls down!**

**White, black, brown, turquoise… we are in harmony.**

**Revelation 7:9, 14:6 -** **tells us what Heaven looks like - every tribe, every nation, every language – all in harmony before the throne!**

**That is why we’re commanded - Go and make disciples of all nations… (Matt 28:19) It’s His amazing song. That’s why racism is a sin.**

**Eph 2:15b His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, (harmony to the animosity between people groups)**

**Early Christians referred to themselves as, “the third race”**

**Romans (Gentiles - allegiance to Rome) / Jewish (Allegiance to Israel) / then a new people in Christ (citizens of heaven) following respected local laws… they were new citizens unified by the cross!**

**This 3rd race - did not belong to any single region, territory, language, or culture – the ancients were a segregated and separated culture – but the body of Jesus said, “We are one!”**

**Next harmony part - Eph 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away (Gentiles) and peace to those who were near. (Jewish) 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (we are all on equal ground)**

**2 - Spiritual harmony**

**Celebrating differences, we unify under one message and truth!**

**Paul later in Ephesians speaking of spiritual unity says… Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (we seek this unity over agreement)**

**Our unity is not based on personal positions – but on JESUS!**

**Is Jesus Lord of your life? Do you seek to follow him?**

**Take my hand – and sing with me!**

**Next part – Eph 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, (You’re not a nomad – wondering without a home) but fellow citizens with God’s people (a new citizen – together & equal!) and also members of his household,**

**3 - Missional Harmony**

**Celebrating difference and unifying under one mission! Together as new citizens we have purpose and a mission- together! (more on this...)**

**Unity is a clear unified sense of direction**

**Eph 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

**This is a reference to Jesus who handpicked, ordained, authorized and commissioned the apostle’s leadership and teaching = the NT!**

**4 - Cultural harmony – we have a kingdom culture**

**Not only racial unity in Christ – but also social economic - we are equal**

**Regardless of music preference, food preference, background, rich, poor, free, slave, men, women, together – we have Harmony!**

**Jesus and the apostles are the unifying foundation V20. Built on Jesus the cornerstone – and the apostles commissioned words to us (the bible)**

**We may not agree on everything – but we are to agree on this (the Bible) – this transcends our opinions. We sing this song!**

**Paul never tried to make the gentiles Jewish or to change their ethnic culture or styles (unless it was immoral) Be you – with us!**

**Eph 2:21 In him the whole building (us – people from diff backgrounds) is joined together and rises to become (Rise up!) a holy temple in the Lord. (individually we are a temple and collectively we are His temple) 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**

**When we strive to keep the common foundation (Jesus and scripture) We grow together like a beautiful building by the great architect Jesus, into a holy temple where God dwells in glory! Not a physical building – but us together! (More in Eph 4)**

**\*Together we are a song to the world! Let me illustrate – A song alone / then a 3-part harmony song. That’s what God wants the church to be – We sing the same truth but sing it differently. We each have our part to play. When it comes together it’s amazing!**

**\*But what we tend do is - 4 parts sing off on purpose. Then say, “you’re off (name), your voice, you’re not signing like me…” funny thing is many that person cannot see that it is them! Instead, come in humbly…**

**\*Another thing we do – sing diff song on purpose. We are not even singing the same song – and you think it is all about you!**

**Harmony is understanding church is not about you – but us – pointing to Jesus the best we know how. (American church consumers – I need this, want this…) This is not about you.**

**Philippians 1:27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, (What is the manner of conduct he is referring to? He follows with what it is…)**

**so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel… (missional harmony)**

**Stand firm in this (fight for this – be secure in this) Be one in spirit and one in mind. Side by side! I love that – joined arms for the gospel. In one mission together – the power of us!**

**Paul repeats something similar to the Ephesians and elaborates - Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you (plead - make it a priority) to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. (What is the manner of conduct he is referring to? He follows with what it is…) 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. (for each other – this is about harmony) 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.**

**The life worthy of the calling of Christ is harmony and unity!**

**You want to live a life that exemplifies the cross? Stop arguing, stop hating, backstabbing, avoiding, and neglecting each other! Be family!**

**We hear, “lead a life worthy of your calling” and think good deeds, feeding hungry, not swearing… but what is means is – unity!**

**\*\*Paul says - I beg you and plead with you make this your priority.**

**Get along, put up with each other (really??? Not focus on missions! Give all your money to the poor!) No – I beg you - try to get along!**

**We naturally have such a hard time getting along. Why? Even among churches! And in churches! People can be difficult!**

**To that Paul says – Eph 4:2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.**

**(Eph 2:14) Christ “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” between us! Our response is to be - “make every effort... to keep the unity” do everything you can to keep and - be ONE!**

**Paul wanted them to stand and step out from that position. The US factor! You are a part of a greater community in Jesus.**

**Our life in Christ is established within the context of community!**

**God’s gift to you is – US! Look around you!**

**You want to honor God? Love us. Love His people.**

**You want to get close to me, bless me, or encourage me – easy. Love on my kids. Be a blessing to them. To love me is to love them. To love them is to honor me. But if you diss them… we will never be close.**

**Jesus is saying, “You want to live in a way that’s worthy of Me? Love the people I fought for, lived for, died for, and rose for, bought and adopted – and am coming back for!”**

**Why Unity is so important! 4 reasons**

* **Unity builds maturity**

**Ephesians is telling us - there is something I am meant to be that I can’t be without you.**

**I can’t look like Christ without you. God has rigged it that way. We come into the family individually, but then together we grow as a community in maturity.**

**I need you – you need me. God built us, to need an us!**

**BTW - You can often see how mature a person is by their ability to be in harmony with others – divisive people are immature.**

**What we find in Ephesians is - True spirituality is unity.**

* **Unity breeds diversity**

**Unity is not conformity, uniformity, or a loss of individuality – true unity breeds diversity!**

**Our differences – our unique gifts – our various personalities – different abilities and different temperaments – are used to build each other up. We need each other!**

**We are not blind to our differences we need them and celebrate them – more on this when we get to Ephesians 4.**

**Like an incredible mosaic masterpiece – difference broken pieces come together to create an amazingly beautiful picture.**

**God is not looking for clones or a mini-me. Be you, with us!**

**This is based on a unity in mission and a greater cause!**

**Imagine… diff people, with diff abilities, diff backgrounds, setting aside differences for a greater cause! We see that story over and over in movies. The Avengers = billions. Why? Because we are better together!**

* **Unity brings family**

**Eph 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household…**

**We receive citizenship to live like a citizen – and**

**We are made family to live like part of the family.**

**We are to be family – with family responsibilities**

**Unity is about sharing in the responsibility of the family**

**Giving, serving, inviting, sharing – bearing the burden together**

**Reality check:**

* **It’s hard to be family in unity - if you’re not showing up**
* **It’s hard to be family in harmony - if you’re not singing your part**
* **It’s hard to be family in maturity - if you’re not walking out your faith with other believer’s regularly**
* **It’s hard to be family in a community - if you don’t seek to resolve relational problems**

**(Ben Stuart) When I think of my kids - for the love of your parents… get along! Please! Nothing breaks a parent’s heart or brings more joy than to see their kids get along. Please, make every effort – to get along!**

**When you were born – you instantly became part of family. You did not get to choose your family. But you do have the choice of being either a good member or a bad member of that family. To help us or hurt us! What kind are you?**

* **Unity embodies Love!**

**The most dynamic identifier of a follower of Christ to the world is unity!**

**Jesus says Speaking to his disciples - John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

**Not just any love, but our love for one another - other disciples – the ones sitting next to you. He says to them / to us you are my song! You want to love Jesus – love us!**

**Harmony and unity is not the Christian gold package – it is where you are to stand – and from there - we walk!**