

“Built Together Part 4 - Our Joy” (9-17-23)

A diverse community

Series Review: Eph. 2:22 - In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Review: Our Heart - a Worshipping Community, **Our Nature** - A Bonded Community

Today: Our Joy - a Diverse Community

1) Enjoy the gift of Diversity

From last week - a diverse yet connected body . . .

Romans 12:4-5 (ESV)

(4) For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,
(5) so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Note: We are each unique, and yet designed to be interconnected - essential for the health of the whole!

United in our diversity. United in Christ (no compromise). Diverse in backgrounds, gifting, & functions.

Romans 12:6a (ESV)

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them . . .

Note: Our diversity is of massive benefit - if we'll lean into it. We use the gifts in the context of “body” - the parts all functioning for the benefit of the whole. This is a gracious gift, and He disperses them on purpose!

Romans 12:6b-8 (ESV)

(6) . . . if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; (7) if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;
(8) the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Note: Coming later in this series - understanding, discovering, and using the gifts. Today - I just want to highlight how we use these gifts: generously, eagerly-diligently (with zeal), and cheerfully!

2) Enjoy the gift of Love

Romans 12:9-10 (ESV)

(9) Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. (10) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Note: To explore this gift of love let's compare Paul's words with the words of Jesus from **John 15** . . .

• Let love be genuine (vs 9)

John 15:9 (ESV)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

Note: Genuine love flows from the Father - to love well, we must abide (be at home) in God's Love

If you struggle with loving well, and consistently, toward all. Then you need to enter into God's love at that point of struggle!

This is why Jesus covered so many aspects of love - defining who our neighbor is, loving our enemies, understanding true sacrificial love, etc.

- **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good (vs. 9)**

Abhor - detest, to shrink from

Hold fast - cleave: to glue together, to unite or join together

John 15:10 (ESV)

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Note: Abiding in God's Love is holding closely to His commands. This gives us practical steps to love well. It also helps define how we love well.

Understanding how to respond in various situations is about understanding love & hate - God loves people, God hates that which is destructive for people. We need to learn to see sin through His eyes of love.

- **Love one another with brotherly affection (vs. 10)**

John 15:11-12 (ESV)

(11) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (12) This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Note: This kind of committed, abiding love produces joy that is deeply bonding and powerful.

- At the Easter service - the link between Joy and the Face (of God and each other)
- Powerful brain development occurs through the **Joy** produced by a mother & baby getting quality face time.

The Other Half of Church (pg. 56)

"When I compared the many Scriptures that describe God's face shining on us with what I now know about how our brains were designed, I came to three important points of convergence: (1) Joy is primarily transmitted through the face (especially the eyes) and secondarily through voice. (2) Joy is relational. It is what we feel when we are with someone who is happy to be with us. Joy does not exist outside of a relationship. (3) Joy is important to God and to us."

Note: Loving with "brotherly affection" is a deeply committed family bond.

We are different, but united. We can be annoyed and angered by our differences, or we can learn to appreciate and even enjoy them!

Psalms 133:1 (ESV)

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

- **Outdo one another in showing honor (vs. 10)**

John 15:12-13 (ESV)

(12) "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Note: How did Jesus just show them his love? He washed their feet! (John 13)

- Joy is transmitted through Face & Voice - now here we are instructed to show **Honor**.
- Face to Face affirmation is huge - **Example:** Men's Retreat - large group, small group

3) Enjoy the gift of Perseverance

Romans 12:11-12 (ESV)

(11) Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. (12) Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Note: Paul immediately follows his points on our diversity & our commitment to love, with a call to endure.

Notice He doesn't say rejoice in perfect and pleasant circumstances but rejoice in hope.

He calls us to be patient in tribulation and gives us the recipe - be constant in prayer.

We need to be consistently talking to God & each other through the ups & downs of life together.

How can we rejoice in hope?

The Other Half of Church (pg. 59-60)

"Joy helps us regulate our emotions and endure suffering. Jesus refused to relinquish joy in the midst of His suffering on the cross. When we are able to stay relationally connected to others and God, we experience joy while we suffer. Joy does not remove our pain, but it gives us the strength to endure. Joy does not replace the unpleasant emotions; instead, it combines with my emotions to keep me relationally connected in distress."

Conclusion: Diversity is a gift, we need each other and should learn to enjoy one another and our differences. Love is a gift, it is difficult and sacrificial, but if we abide in God's love we can love each other well, and be healed and empowered by the joy this produces. Perseverance is a gift, it's incredibly difficult to endure on your own, but we can learn to be hopeful when we stay connected with God and each other through the inevitable trials of life.