

Study 4 - Week of March 7, 2022

KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. – 1 Thessalonians 5:3

You know the feeling. You have just waved to the final parent after a day dealing with endless sweater tugging and tattling, of missing homework and pre-teen attitude. Maybe you spent your day dealing with a curse word on the playground or an irrational parent at drop-off. Maybe you spent it processing an untimely email or mopping up the classroom after a sick student didn't quite make it to the trash can. You know the feeling. The feeling you have when, after all of that, a fellow teacher makes a beeline for you before you can even loosen your tie or find that second of silence in your room once everyone is gone. That one person has a bone to pick with you. Your kids were too loud in the hallway while she was giving her spelling tests. Or, he just needs to inform you that you once again didn't replenish the paper after your copy machine usage.

Maybe it is bigger than that. Maybe this person really has it out for you. Perhaps God's 8th Commandment is being trampled on by one of your fellow called workers and you are the target. You don't know exactly what is being said, but you just know that you are being misrepresented and it makes you so sad....so mad. Maybe it is time for you to even the score and let everyone else know just how much of a hypocrite this person is. You choose your audience. You prepare your response filled with vitriol. You anticipate the gratification of vengeance.

And then you stop. You don't hit send. You don't fire back. You hear a still, small voice say, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love," (Ephesians 4:2). Because, you know that those words you would have said in anger aren't God's words. They aren't encouraging, beneficial, or useful for building up. They are the words whispered in your ear by the Great Deceiver. Satan wants nothing more than to divide those who have been called to work together to share the Gospel in a lost world. Those words wouldn't have sown grace and peace, but instead fostered spite and resentment and weakened the reach of the Gospel in your school and community.

Perhaps it is an overused phrase these days, but give each other grace. Jesus was always so quick to give it away. He was always so good at it. He said things like, "Son, your sins are forgiven," (Mark 2:5) to a man who hadn't asked for it. He said, "Then neither do I condemn you," (John 8:11) to a woman who had lived a horrible life. He said, "Father, forgive them," (Luke 23:34) about those who were trying to kill him. And he says, "My grace is sufficient for you," to all of us. He has forgiven my shortcomings, his inconsistencies, and her flaws. Jesus wants us to work with him. Hear that again...Jesus wants us to work with him. His power is made perfect in our weaknesses, because it isn't about us. It's about him and his grace.

Points to Ponder

Have the last few years increased the stress between called workers? Between called workers and the parents they serve? How?

Describe how thinking of disunity as the work of Satan changes your attitude in stressful situations.

We've already looked at one section of Ephesians. Let's look at a section earlier in the same book: Eph. 2: 19-22. How does the idea of a building (or a body) help drive home the idea of unity?

How can called workers, and believers in general, reflect Christ's grace more readily?

Reflection

Prayer

Lord, ministry is hard at times and relationships are hard at times. We ask you to help us bear with one another in love and fight the temptation to lose our patience or lose our temper. Please help us to see your love for us, and have that love move us to love others. What a joy to serve you and work alongside others who are your people. Drive us into your Word both as faculties and as individuals so that we might grow in our understanding of your will and in our love for you. Amen.

Continue to ponder on the thoughts of this study by reading through the following passages at the end of the day or each day throughout the week for encouragement from God's Word.

Ephesians 4:1-6, Proverbs 14:29, Romans 8:18-25, Psalm 37:1-9