**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**A FIRM FOUNDATION**

***Ephesians 4:1-6*** *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,****2****with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,****3****endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.****4****There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;****5****one Lord, one faith, one baptism;****6****one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

**Ice Breaker:** What is one thing that you know you can count on in your life? It may be a person, an ability or skill, a way of thinking, a group of people, etc. Describe how this brings stability to your life.

**Lesson:** In this passage, Paul encourages the Ephesian believers to live in a manner that is worthy of their calling as sons and daughters of Christ. He instructs them to be humble and gentle; to be patient with one another and act in love toward one another in every way. By relating to one another in these ways, the Ephesians could maintain unity in the Holy Spirit in an atmosphere of peace. This provided a foundation of relationship for their life together as believers and a place of unity from which the Holy Spirit could work in and through their lives.

Paul then describes the foundation of their unified faith. He states, there is one body and one Holy Spirit. This is a declaration that we are to be as one with all other believers in Christ. He says that we are all called in the same hope and that this hope is in our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. He says there is one and only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and He is the Father of all of us who believe. He is above everything, the foundation of everything and He is in each one of us.

The instructions that Paul gives to the Ephesians as a foundation for their life together as believers is to be our foundation as well. It is a doctrinal foundation as well as a relational foundation. Relationally we are to act with humility and gentleness toward one another. We are to be patient with one another and act with love toward one another. Relating to one another in these ways maintains our unity with and in the Holy Spirit and creates an atmosphere of peace. Doctrinally, we affirm one hope, one Lord, one faith, and the need for baptism. There is one God and He is our Father. He is in all, above all, and as amazing as it sounds, He is in each one of us who believe. This is our foundation as believers. A relational foundation for our life together as a unified body of believers and a doctrinal foundation that defines our faith.

Discussion Questions:

* How do you feel about the idea of a relational foundation for your group?
* Are you confident in the doctrinal foundation described here? Is it yours?

**Ministry Time:** Pray for and prophesy over those persons desiring prayer. Pay special attention to those persons who may be having a hard time embracing the foundation they have been given in Christ.

**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**GRACE IS GIVEN**

***Ephesians 4:7-10*** *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.****8****Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”* ***9****(Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?****10****He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)*

**Ice Breaker:** Describe an experience in which grace was extended to you. You were given favor that you did not deserve. Maybe it was a time extension on a project. Maybe you hurt someone relationally and were forgiven. Maybe you forgot to do something you promised to do. What was it like to be given a second chance? What did you do with the grace you were given?

**Lesson:** Grace can be defined as the power to overcome. Each one of us has been given grace as a gift. It is favor that we do not deserve but God gives it to us anyway as an expression of His love towards us. The picture that Paul describes here is that of a conquering king that is returning from a victorious battle. He has descended into battle and now is ascending in victory. He is parading his captives before his welcoming people and during this procession, he gives gifts from what was taken in the battle. One of these gifts is grace.

Our king, Jesus Christ, is victorious over death and over every work that the enemy wants to defeat us with. This battle was won on the cross and was finalized in His resurrection. Because He is victorious, we can be victorious because He has given us the grace to overcome any and every work of the enemy in our lives. There is no addiction so strong that God’s power can’t break. There is no sin so despicable that God can’t forgive. There is no hurt so deep that God’s can’t heal. There is no situation so desperate that God can’t intervene and turn it around.

Grace is the power to overcome but overcoming can be a process. We have to do our part. We have to make the decisions necessary to hold that ground that God has given us and advance into all that God has planned for us. Sometimes we stumble and fall short, but God’s grace is there to see us through. It’s God’s grace that gives us a second chance and even a third chance and fourth chance if needed. Our goal is to be an overcomer and to enter into the fullness of live and ministry that God has for us. He will never leave us and never reject us in this process.

In His victory, we are secure. With His grace, we will overcome.

Discussion Questions:

* Is it hard for you to accept the grace of God? Instead of punishment and judgment, He extends grace and a second chance.
* Is it hard for you to give grace to others? Do you look for revenge or place blame rather than extend forgiveness and a second opportunity?

**Ministry Time:** Allow time for the Holy Spirit to minister to the needs within the group.

**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**FIVE EQUIPPING FUNCTIONS**

***Ephesians 4:11-13*** *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,****12****for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,****13****till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

**Ice Breaker:** Describe a situation in which you were designated to perform a certain role or function. Maybe it was a part in the school drama. You may have been designated as the contact person for a family gathering. You may have been assigned a certain job at work. How did you feel about being entrusted with this responsibility?

**Lesson:** Paul continues to write about some of the gifts Christ has given His body, the church. He says Christ designated some to be apostles; those sent to organize and expand the body. He designated some to be prophets; those that hear what God is saying and inform the body. He designated some to be evangelists; those that tell others about Jesus and bring new people into the body. He designated some to be pastors; those that nurture and care for the body. He designated some to be teachers; those that disciple and mentor new believers into maturity. The reason Christ gave these gifts to His body is so that the entire body of saints can be equipped for the work of ministry and so that the entire body can be strengthened and built up until the body reaches maturity. Each of these gifts describes a function the body needs if it is to be healthy and growing. Each function is important. Each function plays a role in the equipping of the saints so that as one, the body can fulfill the purpose for which it was created. As these gifts function together, the whole body can come to a place of unity in faith and come to the knowledge of the Son of God who is active in their midst.

Some traditions see these equipping functions as roles or positions of leadership. While many leaders do function in one or several of these roles, many ordinary believers have also been given one or several of these gifts. These gifts are needed within your cell group or local congregation in order for it to perform the functions needed to equip the body for the ministry Christ desires. The ministry being described here is not just playing a part in a weekly service. It is ministering to others as Christ ministered. It is leading people to salvation in Christ. It is bringing healing a deliverance to hurting people. It is mentoring young believers. It is organizing the body so that all the various parts of the body are working together. This is what it means to function as the church. Your cell group is the church. Your church needs your participation.

Discussions Questions:

* Do you see yourself functioning in one of these five gifts?
* Do you see other members of your cell group functioning in one of these gifts? How so?

**Ministry Time:** Pray over the people who are functioning in one of these gifts. Organize and release them so that your cell can benefit from their gifting.

**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**RECOGNIZING DECEPTION**

***Ephesians 4:14*** *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting*

**Ice Breaker:** Have you ever been deceived? Most of us have at some time in our lives. Describe the moment you realized that what you believed to be true actually wasn’t. Were you shocked, angry, sad, depressed? If you are comfortable sharing with the group your experience, describe what happened and how you handled the situation.

**Lesson:** Deception. The hardest part about being deceived is that you do not know it is happening. Sometimes deception is relatively innocent. Your family throws you a surprise birthday party and in order to surprise you, they withhold information about their true intentions. Sometimes deception takes the form of betrayal or ill intent. A spouse lies about an affair they are having, or someone borrows money from you with no intention of paying you back. At other times, deception takes the form of a spiritual authority figure coming into a group with persuasive words of new doctrines and inflated gifts, yet their true intent is to lead the group away from Christ and to benefit personally in financial ways. Deception is a primary tool that the enemy uses to divide, scatter and fool the body of Christ.

This is what Paul was encouraging the Ephesian church to be on guard against. His desire was that they be stable in their faith. His concern was that they would be tossed back and forth with every rumor of a new doctrine or latest trend that presents itself to the church. He was warning them to be on guard against deceitful men with impure motives who would plot to trick them and lead them away from Christ.

A primary way to guard against being deceived is to rest in the council of you cell group, your cell leader, and your pastor. Ask them what they think about a new teaching that you have heard or a spiritual leader that you just found out about. Is what being taught in the Bible? Does it feel right to you or do you have a Holy Spirit check in your spirit? It is consistent with what you already know to be true? God is always doing new things and in order for us to grow up into Christ, we will change as we mature. There may be new parts of the scriptures that we discover and seek to apply to our lives. However, there are men and women who will present themselves as the messengers of a new way and do so with impure motives in order to further their own personal agenda. Be on guard against this kind of person. The Holy Spirit will give you discernment. Your cell group is your safety net. You do not have to be deceived.

Discussion Questions:

* How can we help each other to grow in Christ yet guard against deception?
* Are there doctrines you have embraced in the past but now know to be false or incomplete? What are they? How did you come to the conclusion that they were false?

**Ministry Time:** Pray over those in your group that have been deceived. Pray that a spirit of Truth would guide them. You also may need to forgive the person who deceived you.

**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**GROWING UP INTO CHRIST**

***Ephesians 4:15*** *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ*

**Ice Breaker:** Have you ever had to tell someone something they did not want to hear but you knew they needed to hear it for their own good? Maybe you needed to tell your parent or grandparent it was time for them to stop driving. Maybe you told a friend about a bad habit they have that was turning people away from them. Relate this experience to the group.

**Lesson:** Paul’s goal in writing Ephesians 4:1-16 is that we would grow up into Christ in all things. He wanted the body to become mature. His desire was that the body would embrace their foundation in Christ, understand the gifts they had been given as a body, recognize and utilize these gifts to equip and build up the body, and to recognize false teachers and false doctrine when they present themselves.

One of the ways Christ provided for His body for growing up into Christ in all things was the willingness to speak the truth to others in love. Speaking the truth to someone may mean sharing a scripture with them. It may involve addressing a sin issue in their lives. It may be revealing a pattern of behavior in another brother or sister that is detrimental to their walk with Jesus or their relationship with others. Sharing the truth in love means that we always have the other person’s best interest in mind. It is always about encouraging them toward maturity and fulness in Christ. It is never about condemnation or criticism. It matters what you say and how you say it. If you can’t speak the truth in love, it becomes about what you feel you need to say and not about the other person’s growth and blessing.

Speaking the truth in love also means that we are willing to hear the truth spoken to us in love without getting offended, angry, or defensive. Some people are very good at identifying where others need to change or improve but are unwilling to listen when they are confronted with an issue in their own life. Relationships within your cell group need to develop to a level that we trust others to look into our lives and tell us when they see something that is not of God. Having someone tell you the truth about yourself can be one of the most loving things someone else can do for you. We all have blind spots; things about our lives that others see but that we are not aware of. Speaking the truth in love and receiving the truth in love allows us to move beyond many of our issues and grow up into Christ in all things.

Discussion Questions:

* How would you like someone to approach you if they felt they had something to tell you that you needed to hear?
* What actions or words are not helpful when speaking the truth in love?

**Ministry Time:** This lesson may have surfaced a truth about someone that you feel you need to reveal. Someone may have something that you need to hear. Check your attitude and motives. Go to them in private and share your concern. Allow the Holy Spirit to minister in love.

**Cell Group Lessons – Growing Up Into Christ**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

**FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE BODY**

***Ephesians 4:16*** *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

**Ice Breaker:** Relate an experience to the group in which you were part of a team and you “fit”. Your gifts, talents, skills or experience were just what was needed to make the group’s purpose successful. It may be a work group, construction team, study group, work project etc. Your participation, along with the participation of the other team members, allowed the group to achieve its goals. How did it feel to know that without you, the group would have been incomplete and may not have fulfilled the reason the group formed in the first place?

**Lesson:** All of us want to know that what we do matters. God has designed His body so that every part of it is valuable and necessary. One key to experiencing the effective working together in which every part of the body does its share is understanding where we fit in the body and how God has gifted each of us. You cell leader or pastor may help you with this. There are different lists of gifts mentioned in the Bible. They can give you ideas. No one gift is more valuable than the others. It takes all the gifts of every believer, working together, to make Christ’s body whole and healthy. Your cell group needs you to be involved in the life of the cell and to apply your gifts so that everyone can benefit. What you do matters.

A second key is to understand how each of the parts of the body fits together. Paul says that the body is knit together by what every joint supplies. In our physical bodies, a joint is where two parts of the body come together. Examples include elbows, knees, shoulders and ankles. The joint is where two parts work together to provide movement. In Christ’s body, where two parts come together it is called a relationship. When our relationships are strong, we are able to work together and move forward as a body. Strong relationships supply encouragement, purpose, joy, teamwork and motivation. As individual believers, we are strengthened. When our relationships are weak, we are not able to work together, we experience pain, and the body does not function properly.

Christ’s body needs each of us to be healthy and whole. Maintaining healthy and strong relationships and each of us using our gifts to do our part causes the body to grow in Christ and be built up in love. Find your place in the life of your cell group. You are needed.

Discussion Questions;

* One by one, have the group share something positive that each person brings to the group.
* How does it feel to know that your gifts are recognized, valued and appreciated?

**Ministry Time:** Commission group members to use their gifts within the group. Allow the Holy Spirit to minister one to another.