

How to have peace with others when you're annoyed.

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[0:00] So this is God's word. As a prisoner for the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

! Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love.! Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

This is God's word. Amen. Let me pray. Almighty God, we just thank you for the Bible. We thank you that this is the way that you have ordained and designed to speak to your people.

And so we pray as we sit under it now that you'd teach our hearts about ourselves, about who you are. Help us to fixate our attention onto Jesus.

[1:08] And I pray that you'd enliven and encourage us. Rebuke us and correct us where necessary, but we pray that we, your servants, would be trained in righteousness and be equipped for every good work.

And we ask for this in the name of Jesus. Amen. A question from the off is, how do we follow verse 3?

Which is basically, how do we maintain peace? It's easier than it sounds because you put people together for long enough and it is not long before niggles, irritations, you just start to get on each other's nerves.

That is normal. That is one of the things that is exactly what our kind of passage is about, is how to maintain unity, how to maintain peace, which is what we're going to hone in on this morning.

During the better weather over the summer, inevitably, with younger children, maybe you might remember or recollect this, or those of you still got young children, I find myself quite often at the play park with the wee ones.

[2:28] And the most frustrating thing for them to play on with me is the seesaw. Because they need someone who weighs the same for it to work properly.

And what I normally see is Carrie sat on one end, desperate for me to come and play. But then obviously when I sit on it, she pops straight in the air.

And no matter how hard I try to push up and try to, it's always just like, it's always out of balance. It doesn't matter how hard I try, we never get her to hit the ground again.

It just doesn't work. I'm heavier, so we don't balance. Why am I saying that? Well, that idea of balancing is right at the heart of verse 1.

In verse 1, Paul writes, he says, I urge you, halfway through the verse, you see that? I urge you, that you is plural, he's writing to the church. He said, I urge you, the whole church, to live, more accurately that word live is to walk, to live, to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling.

[3:41] That word worthy, it's the word axios. It means like an axis. It's the idea of an axis like a seesaw. And what he's saying is the way the church lives, walks, as God's adopted family, must balance, must be equal to, must be worthy of the salvation and family identity they've been called to.

They must balance each other out. This verse is probably, actually, it's one of the key verses in the whole book and it's the headline really for the rest of the letter through the next, remaining, these next three chapters.

But from the get-go, as he's going to flesh this out in three chapters, from the get-go, Paul points out that a church that walks worthy is the church that is together, a church that is united, a church

that is one, a church that is able to maintain peace.

The Ephesian church is full of people who are different and the potential to be a seesaw church was, you know, really high, to be out of balance, different backgrounds, childhoods, spiritual ideas, different economic status and employment.

All across Ephesus, much like 21st century Scotland. Wherever there is difference, there is the potential for niggles.

[5:12] There is the potential for frustrations, impatience and disagreements and for peace to dissolve. When a church is together, when it's united, when it's one, it is exactly what it should be.

It is a church that is living and walking, worthy of its calling. It's a high bar, isn't it?

It's a high bar. Knowing the salvation that we've been called to, knowing the family that we belong to, it is a high calling to be able, it's a high command in many ways to be saying that we have to walk in a way that's equal to the salvation we've been called to.

And maybe, as you hear that, you might be asking yourself, well, how are we actually supposed to do that? How could we possibly live out a calling that is equal to this amazing church, God's family, this salvation?

And maybe, more personally, we think, you know, I get impatient and frustrated all the time. Today, the Word of God presents us with a new way that says we can balance the seesaw of the Christian life.

[6:35] We can walk worthy. We are able, as a church together, to walk in a way that aligns with our calling into God's family. We're able to maintain peace and to maintain our oneness.

First point, the principle, really, of our passage is that the source of unity is the oneness of God. The source of unity is the oneness of God.

The guiding principle for this oneness, unity, peace in God's people, is that God is one. And it's exactly where Paul will take us in these first six verses.

You just look with how many times we see that word one, verses four to six. See what he says? He says, there's one body, there's one spirit, just as you were called, there's one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who's over all, who's through all, who's in all.

Paul takes us to the very nature of God, his being. And there's two things I want to point out about that. The first one is the oneness of God, of who God is in himself, in his being.

[7:51] Look at who God is here. There's actually three of the seven ones. Three of those ones are actually about who God is in himself. One spirit, the Holy Spirit.

You've got one Lord. It's referring to the Lord Jesus. And you've got one God and Father. Right there, we have the Trinity. We have the living God. It is one but three persons.

He's Trinitarian. God the Father, God the Son, who's referred to as, mentions Lord, Lord Jesus, and then God the Holy Spirit, who God is in himself. Who God is in himself.

It's articulated throughout the word of God. But there are profound mysteries here, to his nature.

Throughout the early days of the church, there's always been pushback.

There still is, about this idea that he's, you know, one God and three persons. And many people, it kind of ties them in knots. And you might have asked this question yourself.

[8:53] You probably have, and no doubt you'll get it. How can God be one and three? The only answer I can give isn't actually, it won't actually satisfy you.

If you think I'm going to, like, come, you know, explain the metaphysics of how God is one and three, you're going to be disappointed. And there is no illustration that does this justice.

If I try to illustrate it, I won't be able to do it properly. It'll confuse you even more. Because the nature of God, the Trinitarian God, one God, three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is beyond the realms of our finite comprehension.

It is beyond our human brains. But it is the heartbeat of who God is. The reading from this morning. Deuteronomy 6, 4, we know he's one.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Right here, verse 6, one God. But our God is three persons.

[10:07] He says he's one God, but also we don't believe in three gods. It's important that we get that, but three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus said to himself, what did he say, John 14?

He says, Whoever's seen me has seen the Father. If you've seen him, you've seen God. The Holy Spirit, all across Paul's letters, is referred to not only as the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit of God, and also the Spirit of Jesus.

The Scriptures, the Word of God, is clear. One God, three persons. But today, it's the oneness that is the important thing. It's because God is one, that there is oneness to his people.

The oneness of God, that foundational reality of him in his being, is actually what dictates everything else. You think foundational realities, they dictate lots of things in life.

When engineers and architects design buildings, it's the law of, the foundational reality of the laws of physics, that dictate their calculations, and how they go about their design.

[11:20] You take the law of gravity, that is a foundational reality, that they have to adhere to. And it dictates every piece of metal, every joint, the foundations must respect the law of gravity.

You can't ignore it. The oneness of God, is the spiritual gravity of the universe. To ignore it, nothing else makes sense.

So the oneness of God, is the reason everything else, in this passage, is one. There are not two bodies, two churches, but one. There are not two hopes, or two faiths, or two baptisms.

There is one, because the one body of the church, we all put our, we all together, have one hope, in one gospel, in one Lord who saves.

We are made alive in him. Baptism, that sacrament, that sacrament that symbolises, we are made new, there's only one version of that. The church is built, it's foundational reality, the truest reality that there is, that God is one.

[12:31] Because God is one, the church is one, and we share one common faith, one common belief. And do we see what that means? You see, it means that actually, a church that is divided, a church that has no peace, a church that has division, is actually a contradiction, of the very God that we worship.

which is where we're going to pivot. So the problem, we have with unity, the problem with being one, is this, impatience and frustration, destroy unity.

Impatience and frustration, destroy unity. Whenever we read something like this, especially it's written to a church, you know, a church at the time, Ephesus, there's at least a suggestion, that the church that he's writing to, struggled with things, that he says, tells them to do.

Second half of verse two, what does he say? He says, be patient, bearing with one another, in love. The opposite, it suggests, that they're maybe struggling, with impatience, and they're not bearing, with one another, but they're frustrated.

And we know why impatience, and frustration happen. I said at the beginning, you put people, who sin together for long enough, and they will sin, against one another. Or, maybe not sometimes, overtly, but sometimes it can just be, you just get annoyed, with people's, like, small details, things they say, their view of life, perspectives, the way they talk, maybe just, opinions.

[14:16] Because the church, is one body, but made up of people, that are different, it's not hard, is it? To eventually, just people, rub one another up, the wrong way. It's exactly, what was happening in Ephesus.

You had, the main deal, back then, you might remember this, from chapter two, the big deal, in this church, and across the whole region, really, is that you had Christians, that came from Jewish families, mixing with Christians, who came, and had no Jewish background, at all, referred to as, the Gentiles.

And you can imagine, what happened, when you get them, in the same space, looks of, you can imagine, looks of horror, on the face of Jewish Christians, when non-Jewish ones, didn't act in a Jewish way, they ate pork, they didn't bother, with circumcision, they probably had a different, way of talking, and worshipping, and singing, and living, and cooking, and maybe different, ethical views, and the vice versa, it'd be the same, the other way around.

You can picture it, what on earth are they doing? Why are they doing that? And we know that it happens, with us too. There are so many things, that have the potential, to niggle us.

Politics, views on the environment, parenting styles, maybe, what we're used to, how we sing, strong opinions, on what the church, should be doing, and how it should be done, and it is easy, to get impatient, and frustrated.

[15:43] Here's a question though, when we feel those things, when we feel that kind of friction, you know, tension, it's good to pause, isn't it, and ask, why does that thing, trigger me?

Why does it trigger, that like, response in me? Because it's just, especially when it's a niggle, and a frustration, you're like, it's just like a small thing. We say, what's going on in my heart, right now? Could be lots of things, perhaps it's a control thing, we want others to see, do or think the same, whereas us, and it's annoying, when they don't.

Or perhaps it's a, a comfort thing, we, we just want to have a day, either at home, or at church, when we're just, not challenged, or just, not irritated.

Can I just, can I just have a day of like, which is when nobody says, just nobody annoys me, just relax. Well, that's normal human experience, isn't it?

[16:48] Here's the problem, if, if we let those attitudes, and thoughts fester, if we don't address them, it can easily lead, subtly, slowly, to losing peace, with one another.

At this point, you know, we're only a, small church, you might look around our small church, and you think, well, I get that this becomes a problem, for a big church, you know, there's loads of people, there's more chance, for differences, but, you know, we don't really have that problem here, do we? Everybody gets along, and, in many ways, you'd be right, but, division doesn't have to be, about big drama, and open conflict, and, that kind of thing, people not speaking, to each other, division, or, losing peace, can be subtle, it could be, privatising your faith, just, this is my faith, I'll do it how I want, thank you, and nobody's gonna, tell me, how I'm gonna do it, could be keeping your cards, close to your chest, rather than, sharing with the person, who has annoyed you, it could be just, switching off relationally, and keeping your distance, a church, can have, the loss of peace, in a subtle way, without it being, overt and obvious, but over time, without left, well, if left, can have painful, consequences, we can look good, on the outside, but have a whole host, of unsaid, unspoken, about issues, and ironically, a lack, of healthy conflict, and talking, about problems, and bringing in, the light, and being open, can actually, cause more problems, in the long term, with people moving, away from each other, just with a cold heart, that way of doing things, is what the world promotes, right, the world says, hang out with people, you are similar to, cancel those, who annoy you, create a tribe, and have superficial, politeness, that's, that's the world's, way of dealing, with all of this stuff, you know,

I mean, the word, toxic, has become used, overly, too much, hasn't it, can't be around that person, they're toxic, these fixes, will all, fail, if we walk that way, our seesaw, is lopsided, and we're not in alignment, with God's calling, into his family, and one body, the question, we haven't really answered it, have we, it still needs to be answered, how do we get peace, how do we maintain peace, in a group of people, how do we get oneness, when we're so different, and when we will sin, against each other, come to our third, kind of point really, which is the gospel, Jesus' body was broken, so that we could have, true unity, one faith, one hope, and one church, the answer is Jesus, we need grace, to bring us together, it's grace, that brings us together, in the first place, that establishes, the peace, but we need, grace to maintain it as well, we need the grace, of Jesus Christ, to keep and maintain, oneness unit, in the church, in his body, that's what we need, but there is grace provided, it's because,

Jesus, one body is broken, it's because, Jesus is fractured, and divided, himself, that he's able, to heal, any division, between us, it's because, Jesus is everything, that this passage, says, he is humble, he is gentle, he is patient, and bears, with us in love, you see, the seesaw, of Jesus' life, never moves, it never moves, the way he walks, the way he lives, is always, in alignment, with who he is, his identity, he's calling, he aligns, there's no discrepancy, his identity, his calling, and his walk, is in perfect harmony, and it is that, perfect, balanced life, that means, that that's the reason, he's obedient, to the cross, it's the reason, he's obedient, to go, so that each one, of those, could be called, to be part, of that body, could be, reconciled, back to him, one people of God, that have one shared faith, in what he's done, it's verse four, it's the reason, what Jesus has done, is the reason, we have one hope, we have hope, in him, in our one Lord, it's the reason, our one faith, is in him, that we're baptised, into his one name, that sign of, the sign,

[21:37] I mentioned before, the water, is a picture, as you go down, into the water, it's the dying, of your old self, and as you come out, a picture of you, starting that new, resurrected life, picture our old ways, the ways of impatience, and frustration, and no peace, dies with Jesus, and as you come out, you get given his, righteous way, of maintaining peace, as we see, how Jesus, has been so patient, actually, reminds us, he's been so patient, with us, never frustrated, with you, but always bearing, with you in love, and as we see, that it shifts, how we think about, one another, because as we rest, in Christ's, finished work, we see, that he had, every reason, to be annoyed, irritated, and

frustrated, with each of us, but never has been, and never will be, it's incredible, isn't it, he's never, been annoyed, at you, and he's never, been frustrated, at you, and as we comprehend, that it changes, how we see ourselves, and how we see, those around us, which brings us, to how we, respond, today, that we get, to walk, in a manner, worthy, of our calling, to maintain unity, we get, to walk, like that, how are we, supposed to walk, like that, how are we, supposed to live, like that, the bar feels, too high, but today, we get, to balance the seesaw, we get, to walk, to live, in a manner, worthy, of our calling, and our lives, will align, with God's calling, into his family, key, is verse three, look with me, it says, make every effort, to keep the unity, of the spirit, through the bond, of peace, now at first, you read that, it looks like, something that we've, got to do, doesn't it, you need to do this, you need to make, every effort, looks like something, that we have to do, but the key is, the phrase, is the unity, of the spirit, the unity, is not a unity, here, that we manufacture, that we make, it's the unity, that the spirit, already has, and this is, this is something,

I really want us, to grab hold of, it's not a unity, that we create ourselves, it's not a unity, that we somehow, manufacture, there is one spirit, not two, so that, the unity, that we're called, to keep, we already have, because each of us, are indwelt, by the same spirit, he's living, in each one of you, who follow Jesus, so you, you already have, the unity, it's created, by, the spirit himself, it's the unity, of the spirit, so, we're called, to guard, maintain, and protect, the unity, that has already, been created, in us, it means, something really, profound, that, we don't have to, rely on ourselves, for this unity, for this oneness, but, we come, as dependent, believers, on God, to maintain, what we already have, that, can only come, through prayerful, dependence, it comes, through asking God, for help, and actually, it's exactly, what Jesus, is telling us, you know, this famous sermon, sermon on the mount, at the end, of the sermon, on the mount,

Jesus, he gives a whole list, of what it means, to follow Jesus, this whole big sermon, explains, what it means, to be his follower, right at the end, he says this, he says, ask and it will be given to you, seek and you'll find, knock and the door, will be opened to you, for everyone who asks, receives, the one who seeks, finds, and for the one who knocks, the door will be opened, and Jesus' point is this, if you want to live out, the sermon on the mount, you can't do it on your own, but you can, if you ask me for help, and so, if we want to live out, life as one body together, if we want to, walk in a manner, worthy, if we want to balance, our seesaw, if we want to be patient, and humble, and bear in love, it is not beyond us, but you can balance, the seesaw, our church can be, a balanced, seesaw church, because the same spirit, that created the unity in us, lives in us, and so we can ask, seek and knock, for oneness, for unity, that the bond of peace, would be maintained, today, when you thought, the bar was too high, you can leave, knowing, that the seesaw, of your life, and of our church, can balance, our calling, it seems impossible, in our own strength, but the spirit of God, empowers you, and empowers us, to live in alignment, with the new life, we've been called to, which we've not been, which we don't have to, create, but which we've been given, God doesn't, create a family, and then forget about it, but actually, the spirit of God, holds both ends, of the seesaw, the call, and the walk, Jesus' body, is broken, to heal, all division, but that he holds us, in our work, giving us what we need, to maintain peace, as we depend on him, we're still going, to get frustrated, we're still going, to get impatient, but today, we get to bring, those niggles, to Jesus, we get to ask, seek and knock, we get to pray, for power, to walk in peace, and I just want, to say, if you're here today, and maybe, you know, you haven't quite, you're still thinking, about what it means, to be a Christian, you're still thinking, about what it means, to look into, the Christian faith, then,

I just want, to suggest, isn't this a better way, to relate, to one another, than the world's solutions, isn't, isn't this, isn't this better, than what the world, offers, where the church, gives, everyone who puts, their trust in him, a place, where we can be ourselves, and grow together, and be supported, and be one in the Lord, well it is a place, where everyone's invited, and it is on offer, to everyone, today, let me pray, Almighty God, we just thank you, for the, the good news of Jesus, we thank you that, Jesus, your body was broken, to heal us, to heal those times, when maybe there is peace, that needs maintaining, and we have, been frustrated, that we've been called, to one another, and not wanted to talk, because we've been annoyed,

[28 : 49] Lord you know our hearts, and we will get, impatient, and frustrated again, and so I just pray, that you'd, by the power of your spirit, that you'd give us a, the patience, and the bearing, bearing with one another, love kind of attitude, the humility, and the gentleness, of Jesus, help us, help us to walk, empower us to walk, in a way, that is worthy, of the calling, to be part of your family,

empower us, to live that way, and so, I just thank you, and I, we do today, as a people, we do ask, seek, and knock, for the power, of the Holy Spirit, that you would, in us, maintain the peace, which you created, in us, and we ask for this, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Amen.