

INTRODUCTION.

CONTINUE LOOKING @ DISCUSSION ABOUT UNITY IN VERSES 1-4.

▶▶ The main idea ~ Verse 1 ~ Verse 2a

▶▶ And In **verses 2b-4**, ~ which we'll study today, ~ Paul shows, ~ through a series of five exhortations, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ how each of us can help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

IN HIS FIRST EXHORTATION, ~ VERSE 2b, ~ PAUL CALLS US TO HAVE THE SAME love for one another.

Loving one another will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

IN EPH. 5:2a, ~ Paul GIVES US A MUCH BROADER PICTURE OF THE EXHORTATION TO love our fellow believers.

▶▶ "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us."

▶▶ "And walk in love". ~ Believers are to live a life that is filled with and governed by love for our fellow believers.

▷▷ Our thinking, ~ attitudes, ~ and behavior are to be characterized by love.

▷▷ And love is to become the deciding factor in our choices and the motivating power in our actions.

▶▶ And how are we to love one another? ~ Well, ~ not with just any kind of love. ~ Paul defines it here. ~ "as Christ loved us." ~ Jesus - Upper room - twice

▷▷ So . . . ~ We are not to love each other with just any kind of love.

↪↪ We are to love each other the way Jesus loves us. ~ I.e., ~ we are to have Christ-like love for one another.

▶▶ And how did Jesus love us? ~ He "gave himself up for us."

▷▷ Jesus loved us so much that He willingly and unselfishly sacrificed Himself for us on the cross, ~ so that we might have eternal life. ~ Cross reveals depth ¶¶ 1/6

▶▶ And we . . . are to reflect that love, ~ Christ-like love, ~ i.e., ~ selfless, ~ sacrificial love, ~ to our fellow believers in our church.

▶▶ And Christ-like love for one another in our church will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

IN VERSE 2c, ~ WE HAVE PAUL'S SECOND EXHORTATION.

HE CALLS US TO BE "IN FULL ACCORD AND OF ONE MIND."

▶▶ The idea here seems to be that Paul is calling us to live in harmony with one another.

▷▷ Harmonious relationships between us will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

PAUL ALSO CALLS US TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER IN ROM. 14:19a. ~~ "So then let us pursue what makes for peace."

▶▶ Paul is calling us here to make every effort to do what promotes peace within our church.

▶▶ David: ~~ "seek peace and pursue it" (Ps. 34:14). ~~ Point is for us to go all out to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain peace.

▶▶ We should expend our energy on things that will bring harmony, ~ not on things that will produce division or strife.

MY . . . ~ WE ARE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO HAVE PEACEFUL AND friendly relationships with one another.

▶▶ We are to have the same respect one for another, ~ to consider everyone as equal, ~ to have the same concern for everyone, ~ and to work together to advance the gospel.

▷▷ Again, ~ harmonious relationships between us will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

BUT, ~ A NOTE OF CAUTION

IN VERSE 3a, ~ WE HAVE PAUL'S THIRD EXHORTATION.

"DO NOTHING FROM SELFISH AMBITION OR CONCEIT."

▶▶ In order to help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity, ~ we must never be motivated or guided by "selfish ambition or conceit." ⇓ 2/6

THE WORD TRANSLATED AS "SELFISH AMBITION" REFERS TO LOOKING OUT FOR AND pursuing only one's own interests.

▶▶It is the attitude that evaluates every situation in terms of how it benefits me.

▷▷I.e., ~ it's the attitude of "what's in it for me?"

▶▶It is also a self-centered attitude bent on gaining advantage and prestige for oneself.

▶▶James points out the result of "selfish ambition."

▷▷James 3:16. ~ "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice ~ [i.e., ~ evil of every kind]."

▷▷The local church "where jealousy and selfish ambition exist" is thrown into turmoil.

▷▷Instead of promoting, ~ strengthening, ~ and maintaining unity, ~ these things cause disruption and unruliness.

↪↪Instead of creating closer fellowship among church members, ~ they destroy it.

(Display verse 3a) IN ADDITION TO NOT BEING GUIDED BY SELFISH AMBITION, ~ WE are not to be guided by conceit.

▶▶Based on my research, ~ it looks like "conceit" refers to three things here.

▷▷1st, ~ insisting that our ideas are always best.

▷▷2nd, ~ to the desire to honor ourselves, ~ attract attention, ~ win praise, ~ and advance ourselves.

▷▷And 3rd, ~ to having an excessively favorable opinion of our own ability or importance.

▶▶I think we might agree that being conceited is not conducive to promoting, ~ strengthening, ~ and maintaining unity in our church.

BOILED DOWN, ~ BEING GUIDED BY "SELFISH AMBITION AND CONCEIT" IS A "ME, ~ me, ~ me" attitude.

▶▶"selfish ambition and conceit" enthrone self instead of God.

▶▶They put self in front of others, ~ totally unlike what Jesus did. ↯↯ 3/6

▶▶ Having these sinful motives causes us to care only about our agenda and opinions, ~ to act as if our agenda and opinions are the only ones that count and are right, ~ ↴↴

▷▷ to act as if we are God's gift to the universe, ~ and to promote ourselves, ~ all to the detriment of others.

▶▶ Being guided by selfish ambition or conceit will tear a church apart at the seams.

▷▷ Therefore, ~ they must be avoided like the plague in order to promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

IN VS. 3b, ~ PAUL'S 4TH EXHORTATION, ~ "IN HUMILITY COUNT OTHERS MORE significant than yourselves." ~ ~ Doing this will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ & maintain unity.

HERE WE COULD ASK, ~ "WHAT IS HUMILITY?"

▶▶ Being humble does not mean that we should put ourselves down or have a poor self-image.

▶▶ And it is not to be confused with false modesty.

▷▷ I.e., ~ A vain or hypocritical pretense of holding a low or humble opinion of oneself, ~ one's abilities, ~ or one's circumstance ~ so as to encourage others to say the opposite.

▶▶ Paul gives us a good definition of humility in [Rom. 12:3a](#).

▷▷ "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment."

▷▷ To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to is a natural human tendency, ~ it's hard wired into our sin nature. ~ ~ The Pharisee

▷▷ But, ~ new creations, ~ so reject that sinful human trait. ~ ~ Put to death what is earthly in us.

▷▷ Believers are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. ~ ~ Rather, ~ we are to think with sober judgment.

↳↳ Moffatt: ~ ~ "he must take a sane view of himself."

▷▷ Humility, ~ Paul points out in [Rom. 12:3](#), ~ is to be honest in our evaluation of ourselves in relation to God and to others. ~ ~ Tax collector represents humility ↴↴ 4/6

▶▶ Continuing along the lines of the meaning of humility, ~ 77

▷▷ it also involves the recognition that it is only by the grace of God we are what we are.

▷▷ Paul acknowledged this in 1 Cor. 15:10a. ~ "But by the grace of God I am what I am."

↳↳ Paul recognized that he was what he was solely because God poured out his special and undeserved favor on him.

▷▷ Evidently, ~ some Christians in Corinth were boasting because of their talents and because of their positions and factions.

↳↳ So Paul put this rhetorical question to them, ~ 1 Cor. 4:7b, ~ "What do you have that you did not receive?"

→→ The obvious answer is that they received all from God and had no right to boast.

▷▷ My . . . ~ what do we have that we did not receive? ~ It is solely because God poured out his special and undeserved favor on us we are what we are.

WE'RE TO HAVE A SANE VIEW OF OURSELVES AND, ~ AS PAUL SAYS AT the end of VS. 3, ~ "count others more significant than" ourselves, ~ which is example of humility on display.

▶▶ Counting our brothers and sisters in Christ more significant than ourselves means that we put them above ourselves in priority.

▷▷ They come first. ~ We come last. ~ We give them the place of honor. ~ Their needs and concerns take precedence over our own.

▶▶ Obviously, ~ this is not what the culture in which we live teaches: ~ "Watch out for #1."

▷▷ But believers are to do the exact opposite of the worldly culture surrounding us.

↳↳ The people of God are not to be cultural. ~ We are to be countercultural. ~ We are to be at variance with the social norm in this fallen world.

↳↳ Our way of life and set of attitudes are to be different than the prevailing way of life and set of attitudes of this present evil age.

↳↳ We're citizens of heaven & are to live the way citizens of heaven should.

↳↳ And one of the things this means is that we maintain a sane view of ourselves and value our fellow believers above ourselves. 77 5/6

VERSE 4 CONTAINS PAUL'S FIFTH AND FINAL EXHORTATION THAT WHEN followed will help promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity.

"LET EACH OF YOU LOOK NOT ONLY TO HIS OWN INTERESTS, but also to the interests of others."

▶▶It's important to understand that it's not that believers are not to look out for our own needs and concerns.

▷▷Paul says "look not only" to our own needs. ~~ "only" is a key word here.

▶▶But we are not to make our needs and concerns a priority to the exclusion of our fellow believers' needs and concerns.

▷▷Our sphere of concern should be broader than ourselves, ~ and should include the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▶▶In Gal. 6:2, ~ Paul writes, ~ "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

▷▷The word for "burden" means literally "a heavy weight or stone" someone is required to carry for a long distance.

↪↪Figuratively it came to mean any oppressive ordeal or hardship that was difficult to bear.

▷▷Burdens come in all sizes and shapes. ~~ And no believer is exempt from them.

↪↪So we need to help each other carry the heavy weights in our lives that we need to carry for a long distance.

CONCLUSION.

MY . . . ~ CARRYING OUT THESE FIVE EXHORTATIONS IN OUR LIVES WILL HELP promote, ~ strengthen, ~ and maintain unity within our church.

▶▶So let's make every effort to carry them out.

LET'S PRAY 6/6