

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Sometimes we can feel the temptation to end letters full of instruction with lists and bullet points, but Paul was smarter than that. He knew that after sharing powerful, life-changing truth with the believers in Ephesus, what they'd need was a really good story about a real life relationship that illustrated perfectly everything he'd been writing about. And that's why he closed the letter in the best way possible: by pointing them to a man who had become a friend even though he should have been an enemy. His name was Tychicus, and here's what we know about him:

1. **He was FAMILY:** Paul was a Jew and Tychicus was a Gentile. It isn't an overstatement to say that Jews and Gentiles hated each other, and Jews were convinced that THEY were God's chosen people. There was no room for more in the family, and the fact that Paul calls this Gentile a "dear brother" was proof that when he wrote in Ephesians 2:11-22 about Jesus destroying the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, he meant it. It wasn't theory; it was God's plan and it worked.
2. **He was FAITHFUL:** According to others passages of Scripture, Tychicus had been through some pretty hairy times with Paul. In Acts 20, we see that he stood with Paul when others wanted to kill him. That's the kind of faithfulness that makes relationships grow even stronger, and when we're faithful in difficult times, it leads to unbreakable unity. It's not surprising then, that Paul entrusted carrying what we know as Ephesians – God's word – to the church in Ephesus.
3. **He was FOCUSED:** So many times we get distracted by things that only benefit ourselves or by our own personal drama and we forget that we are soldiers with a specific set of orders to carry out, and we're side by side with other soldiers who are also carrying out orders. We can't go off the rails and do our own thing because others are counting on us. As Paul said in Ephesians 6, we are in a fight and our purpose is to stand, as one, against a defeated enemy.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- As you've thought back through this week's message, what one thing – if any – inspired you or maybe even confused you?
- It's been a great 17-week journey through the book of Ephesians. Are there any verses or Big Ideas that have really impacted you or challenged you from this series? Take a minute and allow everyone to write out a "one-minute takeaway" from the series. (We've included all the Big Ideas on the next page to help jog your memories)
- Read John 13:35 - "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (NLT) How do you think Paul including Tychicus at the end of Ephesians helped live out the truth in John 13:35?
- On a scale of 1-10 (1 being shut up tight and 10 being a wide open), how open are you in your relationships with other believers? How about with other believers who are very different than you?
- Compare the way Paul described Tychicus (family, faithful, focused) with the man described in Proverbs 18:1 – "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against wise judgment." (NKJV) List some of the benefits and obstacles that we may face as we live as open books with each other.

BIG IDEAS from each week:

1. When one choice impacts every choice, we'd better make the right choice.
2. The blessings of grace produce hearts filled with praise.
3. When we're thankful and prayerful, our hearts will be full.
4. God chooses us "in spite of" to use us "in light of."
5. We can't be walled in if we're going to be all in.
6. We are in the parentheses because we explain the mystery.
7. To really know the Father's love, get to know the Father's family.
8. The difference between a choice and a chore is ownership.
9. The gifting does the lifting.
10. God wants us to grow up before we grow out.
11. New affection leads to new direction.
12. As Christ followers, our fashion should match our passion.
13. When you're God's kid, you'll do what God did.
14. Satan uses marriage in his shame plan, but God uses it in His game plan.
15. When it comes to authority, just like gravity, what goes up must come down.
16. Because Jesus won the war, we can stand and fight.
17. When we're an open book, God can write stories that make a difference.