

God's People Part 2: How We Act
Real Community
Ephesians 6:21-24

Introduction: The overarching context of the book of Ephesians is the family we have been blessed to be part of through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The first three chapters lay out who we are as God's people and, in so doing, teach us that we have been made His fully favored kids, not simply as individuals but also as members of a very real family with a very real and glorious future! For instance,

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Chapter four then transitions to how we should act as God's people. But, Paul does so by first reminding us that we are not only individually children of God, but in being children of God, we are also a true and very real family with all who are in Christ! Therefore, the way we, as God's children, should live is not only in the context of how our actions, words, and attitudes impact our own lives, but also with a commanded awareness and intentionality about how our lives impact other believers! For instance, Paul writes,

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Elsewhere we read things like,

15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:19-21)

Therefore, with such a consistent emphasis on God's people being a holy family and treating each other as such, it's no surprise that we see a true, sincere testimony to the

mutual love Paul, his team, and the believers in Ephesus have for one another. Look at how Paul concludes this letter,

21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible. (Ephesians 6:21-24)

Proposition: The conclusion of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus contains two testimonies of the sincere, loving relationship Paul, his team, and the church in Ephesus had for one another (real community!).

I'm going to quickly walk you through these two testimonies. Then I'm going to take some time to tell you the story of Paul and his relationship with the church in Ephesus, so you can see that this is not wishful thinking or empty words, but a true description of God's people living in real community with one another.

The first testimony of their love for one another was,

(1) Their mutual commitment to stay connected. (6:21-22)

- A.** I will explain more about the historical context of their relationship in a minute. For now, you just need to remember that God has called Paul to be an Apostle, with a specific mission to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, which necessarily entails creating healthy, growing local churches throughout the Gentile world. In that effort, Paul could have easily checked off a box when he got a local church up and running in a city and just moved on, but he didn't. You don't just move on and forget about family and follower of Jesus are family forever!. As long as there is no reason to legitimately break fellowship with family, you should find ways to stay connected, and that was true of Paul and his relationship with the churches he started as well as their relationship with Paul.
- B.** Healthy relationships are a two-way street. The church in Ephesus was just as sincerely eager to know how Paul and his team were doing as Paul and his team were to know how the believers in the church in Ephesus were truly doing. Verses 21 and 22 point to that mutual commitment. Paul writes,
- C.** **21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.**

- D. **“21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing,”** implies that Paul already knew how the church in Ephesus was doing, and it’s an implication we can confidently say is true because he opened the letter with this,

Note: 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (Ephesians 1:15-16)

- E. But because he knows the people in Ephesus truly love him, he knows they sincerely want to know how he’s doing as well! At this point in Paul’s ministry, he’s a prisoner, likely in Rome, with no idea how long he’ll remain there. Therefore, because Paul knew how much the church in Ephesus sincerely loved him and his team, he not only wanted to send a letter to them, but he also wanted to send somebody from their team that he knew they trusted. Paul needed that person to sincerely relate with the believers in Ephesus and be trusted by him and the believers in Ephesus to explain what he was writing in the letter. This is why Paul chose Tychicus. My Logos Bible software produced the following article on Tychicus:

Note: “Tychicus emerges from the New Testament as one of Paul’s associate workers[1]—a figure whose significance lies not in prominence but in quiet, consistent service. From the province of Asia, possibly Ephesus[1], he first appears accompanying Paul (Acts 20:4) during the apostle’s travels, and later becomes the main bearer of Paul’s letters to Colossae, Philemon, and Ephesus[1].

Paul’s repeated descriptions reveal Tychicus’s character. Across multiple letters, Paul identifies him as a “beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord” (Col 4:7–9)—language that underscores both personal affection and trustworthiness. Paul asked him to share news about his imprisonment and what God was doing in Rome[1], a responsibility that required both reliability and the ability to represent Paul’s perspective accurately. His mission involved greetings and encouragement, with no suggestion he was to enter debates Paul was having with false teachers[1].

Tychicus’s assignments expanded over time. Paul had plans to send Tychicus to Titus at Crete[1], and later sent him to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12). He effectively took over Paul’s pastoral role, since Paul was unable to visit the churches himself[1]. Beyond his letter-carrying duties, Tychicus shared Paul’s Roman imprisonment and was helpful to him in many ways[2].

What distinguishes Tychicus is his embodiment of servant-leadership. He was a beloved brother willing to stay with Paul despite difficult circumstances, a faithful minister whose love revealed itself in action, ministering both to Paul and for Paul to assist in his obligations[2]. He represents the kind of unglamorous but essential support that sustained early Christian ministry—the

person who could be counted on when the work was hard and the stakes were high.

[1] Brian Wintle and Bruce Nicholls, *Colossians and Philemon*, ed. Federico G. Villanueva et al., Asia Bible Commentary Series (Carlisle, Cumbria; Manila, Philippines: Asia Theological Association; Langham Global Library, 2019), 163.
[2] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 2:149.”

- F. In short, Paul invested significant time and relational effort in Tychicus and raised him up to be trusted in this capacity! Tychicus was more than ready and, as such, demonstrated the seriousness of Paul's commitment to the local churches he had started. Paul not only trusted Tychicus to personally represent him well but, more importantly, to properly minister to and encourage the body, including interacting with and explaining what Paul wrote in the letter.
- G. It's also important to remember that Paul was likely writing this letter from a Roman prison, and therefore, sending one of his most trusted “employees” away on a trip of this nature was no small matter. It demonstrated Paul's commitment to create a localized movement of the Gospel across the Gentile world and his sincere love for those he was launching that movement in. Sending Tychicus left him a man down to help him while he was in prison, and there was no guarantee of when he would be back or if ever!

The second testimony of their love for one another was,

(2) Their sincere desire for each to fully experience God's life. (6:23-24)

- A. **23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.**
- B. Now some of you are saying, “Wait a minute, this says nothing of what the church in Ephesus desired for Paul. This is Paul's statement of his desires for the people in the church in Ephesus.” To you I say, “Good job!” These two verses are what Paul desires for the people in Ephesus, but, in the story of Paul's relationship with the church in Ephesus that I'm going to share with you in just a minute, we see that they certainly truly longed for the very same things for Paul and his team.
- C. So, let me quickly walk you through the four elements of God's life that Paul specifically expresses his sincere desire for the believers in Ephesus to experience fully and abundantly. Each of these elements is made possible exclusively by the work of Christ on the cross!

1. **Peace – the product of sincere confidence in one’s value, purpose, future, as well as healthy, stable, loving relationships.**
 - a. **3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. (Isaiah 26:3-4)**
 - b. **27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14:27)**
 - c. **5 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)**
2. **Love – the experience of being the unshakable and uncompromising object of a person’s sincere attention, effort, concern, and affection.**
 - a. **4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5)**
 - b. **9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)**
3. **Faith – the glad trust and submission we must have in Christ to know and experience God’s life.**
 - a. Faith is how we abide in God’s love in a real way. As a matter of fact, we can’t experience it any other way. So Paul makes it clear that he doesn’t desire that the believers know God’s love in an abstract, intellectual way, but rather in a real, experiential way, which is only accomplished in faith. This is why Paul wrote this earlier in his letter,
 - b. **17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)**
 - c. **20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by**

**faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
(Galatians 2:20)**

- d. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)**

4. Grace – the glorious unmerited favor of God on all who refuse to quit loving Him.

- a. He says, **“24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.”** Many commentators take this to mean “all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love that doesn’t perish.”
- b. “It is, however, not in conflict with good grammar to construe this last phrase as an adverb; hence, ‘imperishably.’ As to what it modifies it surely seems more natural that it would belong to the nearby *loving* than to anything more remote. In harmony with many interpreters, therefore, and also with most translators, I, therefore, translate as follows: ‘those loving imperishably,’ which is the same as saying, ‘Grace (be) with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love which, once present, can never perish.’”¹
- c. This takes us back to what defines winning: not quitting! (Ephesians 6:11,13).
- d. But does that mean his favor (grace) is then earned by our ability not to quit—no. There’s not enough faith in the world to EARN what God gives. **Faith is not a work that earns anything; it’s a way of receiving what’s been earned by somebody else—Jesus!**
- e. This is why the Bible writes things like this,
- f. **3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. 5 And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” (Romans 4:3-8)**

¹ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [*Exposition of Ephesians*](#) (Vol. 7, p. 285). Baker Book House.

- g. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

So, the end of Paul's letter gives two very clear testimonies of a real and committed relationship between Paul, his team, and the church in Ephesus. But how do we know that's not just lip service? In an age where insincere, meaningless virtue signaling runs rampant on social media; where people publicly proclaim all kinds of emotions about things they never demonstrate any evidence of there actually being a sincere commitment to, how do we know this wasn't that?

Well, first and foremost, Paul is an Apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But setting that massively important fact aside, the story of the relationship between Paul, his team, and the church at Ephesus makes the sincerity of the words at the end of this letter unquestionable. Let me quickly walk you through this beautiful story of how the body of Christ should live in real community with one another.

After 18 months of ministry in Corinth during Paul's second missionary journey, Paul felt led to return to the church in Jerusalem and then on to Antioch. To do this, he set sail from Corinth in modern-day Greece to Ephesus in modern-day western Turkey. In Acts 18, we see what happened,

18 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. 19 And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. 21 But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. (Acts 18:18-23)

It appears Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus and continued to preach the Gospel and equip the local church to grow in Christ and reach Ephesus, while Paul sailed on to Caesarea. Paul then went up to the church in Jerusalem (always considered "up" because Jerusalem was on a mountain), then journeyed back to Antioch (his sending church), spent a little time there, then got back on the road. Meanwhile, here's what God was doing in Ephesus through the ministry of two key members of Paul's team (Priscilla and Aquila)

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he wished

to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus. (Acts 18:24-28)

Two people that Paul left in Ephesus to help raise up a strong, growing local church to reach that city were instrumental in helping equip this passionate, talented preacher, Apollos, to understand and preach the Gospel more accurately, and then endorse his ministry to the church in Corinth, where God did amazing things through Apollos!

Sometime after that, Paul made it back to Ephesus, and he ended up staying there for approximately three years! He spent more time in Ephesus than he did any other city!

“Paul’s initial visit to Ephesus occurred in late summer of A.D. 51, during which he taught in the synagogue. His more substantial engagement with the city came when he returned and spent three years there, from summer A.D. 52 to summer A.D. 55.”²

Acts 19 records,

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. (Acts 19:8-10)

Paul trained up all kinds of leaders via a platform and method that essentially functioned as both a seminary for training leaders and a daily gospel crusade all at the same time.

Paul and the church also went through all kinds of things while he was there, which would have bound them even closer.

For instance, God was doing “extraordinary miracles” (Acts 19:11). Comically, seven traveling Jewish exorcists, who were the sons of a Jewish high priest, heard about the handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul and were then laid on people who then received healing and/or experienced the casting out of demons! So they tried to invoke Christ’s name and Paul’s to cast a demon out of a man who then physically beat them so bad that they ran away wounded and naked! (Acts 19:16). This resulted in a massive act of repentance by people in the church who were still practicing or believing in witchcraft. They brought their books to church and burned them! The total value of the books burned was 50,000 pieces of silver, which was essentially 50,000 days of work!

² Generated by Logos Bible Software. Eckhard J. Schnabel, [*Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*](#) (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), [107–108](#).

Later, the silversmiths who made a living from the idols they made and sold to tourists who came to worship at the Temple of Artemis began to notice that when people believed in the Gospel Paul preached, they no longer believed in or wanted anything to do with the idols they sold. The Christians never protested the idol makers or organized a boycott, and seemingly never even acknowledged them; Paul and the believers just kept preaching the Gospel, and people kept believing in Jesus, which necessarily meant they no longer believed in or wanted to buy the idols! So, the silversmiths organized a riot demanding that something be done about Paul and the other followers of Jesus, but the town clerk immediately shot it down because he knew that what was happening could be viewed by Rome as an illegal riot with no legal basis.

After everything settled down, Paul realized it was time to hand the church over to the leaders, and he set out on the third and final phase of his missionary journey. Months later, he felt led to return to Jerusalem, specifically to arrive before the day of Pentecost. As much as he deeply loved the church in Ephesus, he couldn't take the time to stop there, so he sent word to Ephesus and had the Elders of the church journey down to Miletus to meet him there. Here's where we really see just how deeply connected Paul was to the people he had spent three years of his life with.

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. 18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus,

how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. (Acts 21:17-38)

Everything Paul said to them came from a deep sense of love and community with the church in Ephesus. Those were not the words of somebody trying to make a name for himself, but rather words from the gut for a church and its leaders that he deeply loved; that he had labored with and done life with every day of his life for three straight years. We also see that the Elders are not celebrity struck by Paul, but deeply respect, admire, and love him! They grieve over the realization that they will likely never see each other again, and indeed Paul never made it back to Ephesus. Paul and the church in Ephesus labored together, grew in Christ together, suffered together, and did life together — all for the same reason: to proclaim the life-giving power of the Gospel to the people of Ephesus and the surrounding region! In so doing, they exemplified the brotherhood; the locked arms committed love for one another that you never forget or leave behind in your heart and mind even if you can’t live near one another; the kind that ensured you found meaningful ways to stay connected before social media, emails, text messages, phone calls, and video calls could happen at any time and anyplace. It is this deep commitment to live in community with these people that later played a part in what we read at the end of his letter to the church in Ephesus. It’s why Paul sent Tychicus. It’s why the church in Ephesus continues to send word to Paul. They loved each other, and their actions, words, and attitude made it really clear. So!

Challenge: What do your actions, words, and attitude in the life of the local church say about how much you love being loved by Jesus?

The fact of the matter is that when you love being loved by Jesus more than anything, you naturally deeply love the family He saved you to be in!! This is not only a logical implication of the Gospel but a very clear statement of truth in the Bible. For instance, John wrote,

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

The family of God is not theoretical or metaphorical. When God saved you, He saved you into a family that has not only been given power over the sin that separates us from God but also each other. He saved you to be in a family that will not only abide with Him forever but eternally abide with one another as we abide with Him forever!

The problem is that we have become so self-centered and materialistic in Western society that we only value relationships with others for what they bring to our need for affirmation and help in achieving our personal goals. Despite the fact that God’s life is only experienced in the context of the giving and receiving of His love between Him and us and us and one another, the church in the West continues to march towards the lie of Satan that life is truly

lived in the pursuit of career success, the satisfaction of perfecting a hobby, or the thrill of physical achievements in things like sports. Now let's be clear, there is nothing wrong with any of those things; as a matter of fact, there's plenty of good in them; but that's not where God's life is truly experienced. God's life is meant to be experienced in real, tangible unity with HIM and with those who are in HIM, and this is why the local church is vitally important! Getting plugged in with a local church is how you practically participate in the family. A local church is not a building, nor is it a worship service, but a literal fellowship of believers where people do life together, help each other stand and grow in the faith, and put their time, talent, and money together to be a movement of the Gospel in their region and around the world!

Life in the body can be hard and messy, and nobody has it all right; thus, like a marriage, we must be committed to loving one another as Christ commanded, and, as such, bear one another's burdens as we figure it all out! We are going to bump into each other and step on each other's toes; we are going to hurt each other's feelings, and let each other down, but because we are family, we are not going to let failure define us or even be our focus. Because Christ loves us, we are going to forgive each other as Christ has forgiven us, and stay focused on loving each other, helping each other, and serving one another in the cause of bringing as many people as possible into the family to enjoy it with us! That's what God has called and BLESSED us to get to do with each other; the question then is, ARE WE DOING IT?