

Do We Hate One Another?

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of love, unity, and compassion in the church, and the need for Christians to respond to social issues in a way that is consistent with God's love and truth.

Duration: 41:27

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1

Topics: "Unity in the Church", "Love and Hatred"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the critical question of whether Christians harbor hatred towards one another amidst a climate of civil unrest and division. He emphasizes the need for the church to respond with love and unity, rather than succumbing to the world's divisive attitudes. Idleman highlights the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit to combat judgmentalism and hatred that can creep into the Christian community. He urges believers to engage in civil discourse, recognize their biases, and strive for understanding and reconciliation, all while upholding the truth of God's Word. Ultimately, he calls for a change of heart and action to foster unity and love within the body of Christ.

Transcript

The title of the message is, Do We Hate One Another? Do we hate one another? And most of you are aware, but in case you're not, this is a good reminder, our nation, the church is a a crossroad. The civil unrest is not going to get better, it's going to get worse. And people sometimes say, well you shouldn't talk about that from the pulpit.

Really? The pulpit should be the voice of truth. Redirecting and directing us back to what God's word says. The racial issues are not going to end, the immigration issues are not going to end, political parties bickering, fighting are not going to end.

We live in a very volatile place right now. And I believe that Christians need to respond as Christians. Not like the world.

That's the difference. There's a difference there. And something that really jumped out at me, I like to read, when I read Ephesians 4, I read it over and over and over again.

I go to the context because remember the chapter and verses are only about 500 years old. The Bible is written as one letter. So to properly understand it, you have to look at the context.

What was said before, what was said after, what is Paul saying to the church in Ephesus as a whole. And if you go back right before Ephesians 4, Paul is talking about being strengthened in spiritual things. Being rooted in love, being grounded in the Holy Spirit, being filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Does anyone want that? I'm assuming that's why most of us are here. I want more of God. I didn't come to play church and I know you didn't either.

We don't need more fellowships and more social gatherings, those are wonderful, but we need to meet God, we need to hear from God, we need to be challenged and changed and transformed and built up. So Paul is saying to the church in Ephesus to be strengthened, to be rooted and grounded in truth, to be filled with the fullness of God. He'll say, I beseech you brethren, here's what you need to do.

It's interesting. Now let me just help you out a little bit here because you probably think this word hate is strong, and it is. I don't believe that Christians are haters, but I believe that hate can creep in.

Can it? Well, let's define the word hate to fuel, I'm sorry, fuel is good too, but to fill an intense or passionate dislike for someone. Can that happen in the Christian community? Let me just throw out Nike and Kaepernick. Let me just throw out Trump and Obama.

Let me just throw out God's truth compared to what the world says. And you can see there's a lot, does anybody ever post something, you just, do you have to unfollow them like me? Or the Twitter feeds and different things? And there's a dislike that comes up, and actually it comes up in the church. I don't like that kind of worship.

And preference begins to become the gauge by which we judge others. So hatred, dislike, judgmentalism, pride, all creeps in. And actually Proverbs reminds us that hatred, when we have intense or passionate dislike for someone, what does it stir up? It stirs up conflict.

So we're seeing tremendous amount of conflict when Christians should be the voice of reason, having civil discourse, we are often, and now most of you at this church as far as I'm aware of are very good at this, so let's, I mean, good at what I'm, at the positive things. So this will be for the vast majority of others out there, right? There's this stirring of conflict. And I put something on Facebook, I said, before you post something on Facebook, are you sowing discord? Because the Bible says, Proverbs says, six things the Lord hates, yea seven are an abomination to him.

He goes into a list, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, feet that are swift to running to evil, and one who sows discord among the brethren. So when we have discussions, are we trying to, what's this, I'm not Cabbage Patch, dancing, stirring the pot? Stirring the pot, are we sowing discord? Because it stirs up conflicts. And this is hard, isn't it? Any theology lovers out there like me? Oh, there's a lot more.

And some of you are putting up your hands, and I know who you are. We like to stir the pot, don't we? We want to stir up conflict. We want to post things about John Calvin.

We want to post things about Jacob Arminius. We want to post things about cessationism, gifts of the Holy Spirit ceasing. We want to put the gifts of the Holy Spirit in somebody's face.

We want to, all these issues, we just want to stir, and we want to prove that we're right, and our point is right. That's not of God, that's not standing up for truth. You can lovingly, now before, like Jesus, you overturn the money changers tables, you better have a right heart.

Love, just bubbling over with love, and then do what you feel called to do. But don't do it just to start an argument. Politics, what about convictions in other areas? Stirring the pot.

I can say four words that could stir the pot. Public schools, private schools, homeschooling, or charter. Oh, Lord.

There's Facebook pages dedicated to every one of those, and everybody is passionate about their opinion. Right? The public school people want to say, my kids are missionaries in the public school system. Well, bless it be to God, mine aren't.

Little John, he's not ready for that just yet. Well, I lean towards charter because this, and I homeschool because of this, and I go to private because of this. And we fight, and we have discord, and that's not the heart of God.

Now, of course, it's okay to have opinions. In case you haven't noticed, I'm pretty opinionated. And I could camp out on either one of these issues, and show you what my point is, but that's not what the pulpit is for.

And pastors have to fight this. Nobody's perfect, but we have to get rid of this area of hatred. God has a sense of humor.

I saw so much, even this week, on vegans, and meat eaters, and all this food. It's just silly stuff from Christians, just bashing each other, bashing each other. Stirring the pot.

Judgmentalism comes in. The reason is, I guess I just let you know up front, as many Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit. So they're not filled with love, and joy, and peace, and longsuffering, and gentleness, and kindness, and goodness.

They're not filled with that. They're filled with the things of the world, and what is inside comes out. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

When a vessel is struck, what's inside just spills out. So often, what we see coming out of our lives is what is really in us. So what has to happen? Change of heart.

The Holy Spirit has to be given full reign. And this week, I pray God, break me. Lord, humble me.

I need to feel love for those I don't feel love to right now in this culture. God, please help me. I need to feel love.

I need to see them how you see them. Now here's a warning alert. When I get to Ephesians 4, in case you haven't heard me speak too much, I have usually long introductions.

So I'm going to paint the backdrop until we get into the main meat. The warning alert is this, carnal Christians and Pharisees will not like this type of message. Just let you know up front.

Carnal Christians and Pharisees and within the Christian church do not like to be challenged in the way they live. Why? Because the Pharisee likes to tell everyone else they're wrong. The carnal Christian likes to enjoy their sin and doesn't want to be challenged.

But here's the problem. When we're silent about sin, it robs us of joy and forgiveness. Think about that.

There's so many churches they want to be politically correct. Shane, we don't want to talk about sin. No, but you're robbing people of forgiveness that God offers.

So when you talk about things that are hard to hear and people take that to God and are changed, you just allow them to experience God. So when we're silent about these types of things, we're silent about sin in general, when we don't tell sinners that they're sinners in love, we rob them. We can rob them of God's forgiveness.

I remember there was an article out about a big church, probably 10 years ago now, and they asked one of the associate pastors, well, when do you talk to people about sin? Like, oh, well, maybe a year from now, once they're plugged into the church and maybe hopefully the Bible will convict them, hopefully, you wait a whole year. Yeah, because we don't want to, you know, they're searching right now. And I know where their heart is.

I know what they're trying to say is you don't want to just slam somebody right when they walk in. You want to build a relationship, but you have to let the Word of God speak. And it might convict that day, that hour, that minute.

And when you're filled with the Spirit, it's easier to discern what the will of God is, engage your own heart. Let me just give you a few examples before I get to the text. On both sides, I've seen a lot of things come up, and maybe I'm bringing this up partially because many of you know, last week I had the privilege of being at a unity event where myself and a pastor of predominantly a black church, black pastor, a friend of mine, we sit down and we ask the hard questions.

And the reason is to get rid of the elephant in the room, you have to talk about the elephant in the room and open the door, the roll up door, the garage door, right? You have to see in the black community, the white community, Hispanic and immigration, Asians, and this, you have to talk about it, bring it to the surface. Let me hear what you're saying. Let me try to understand where you're coming from.

Because if we're just avoiding it, we'll post things on Facebook, they'll post things on Facebook. And then the nation is just in an uproar because nobody's being allowed to vent and share their heart. And then we can point them to what the gospel says.

So, and I don't want to get off track here, but I saw websites or selling things like why I hate Colin Kaepernick shirts. Christians ordering why I hate Colin Kaepernick shirts, if I pronounce his name, I apologize. But see, that's not the message Christians need to be sending.

Your experience is true to you. And my experience is true to me. So when I sit down with different groups, different people, different religions, you have to understand that what their experience is, is their experience.

You can't tell somebody different when they've experienced something different. For example, I brought up the issue of being black in America and the slavery issue and what we see in some of the police officers that do not represent even one fraction of the wonderful law enforcement officers, but that's their perspective. And then my perspective is seeing as America is good because America is an institution.

Institution can't be good or evil. It's the, it's the reflection of the people that govern it. And so from my perspective, what we see, and then we share perspectives, differences are God given.

We have to realize that differences are God given. I am deaf. I'm deficient in some areas.

And so are you correct? And the case, the racial issue is one of the top things that the, the, the, the, the, the nation's going to blow its top at some point, civil unrest, civil discord. And I can't understand that side of it. I'm not a black person and they can't understand where we're coming from.

So you have to realize we're deaf. There's deficient deficiencies. I can't understand where a single mom is coming from and people can't understand where we come from as a pastor living in a fishbowl.

And we, we understand, we come together and understand that differences are God given. Let me just give you one example. We are supporting and helping.

There's a tent revival going on the weekend after Grace Fest and Yvette's putting that on Iran. And I don't have the same kind of heart for that. Solid messages, a lot of worship, just seeking the heart of God.

But I've also been involved in an upcoming conference. It's here in October where speakers are coming in from all over paying their own way. And I've also been involved in a tent meeting at a predominantly black church and what that, and these three are not even close.

The type of music, the type of speakers, the type of ambience, the type of atmosphere, the type of theology, what the goal is, what the purpose is. They're so different. So who's right? Preference, preference.

If what we're putting on here at this church in October, if we try to go put this in East Lancaster, not going to work. It doesn't reach that type of, that's not the goal. So God gives us different diversities in ministry, but the same spirit.

Diversities of gifts, but the same spirit who works all in all and brings the body together. This is so important. I know one famous Christian artist, Lecrae, many of you know him, maybe the kids do.

He came out and he said, I'm a Christian, I'm a rapper, but Christian is my faith, not my genre. And he lost millions of viewer support. Now, in my opinion, he didn't say anything wrong.

He's saying, don't put me in as a Christian rapper in this little group. I want to go in and affect the culture. I want to be a Christian inside this culture.

But people took it the wrong way. They got offended because social issues are a big thing right now. Huge thing right now.

And most of you have heard this on the news. If you haven't, it was disheartening. We have an elected leader by the name of Maxine Waters.

She said, I wake up in the middle of the night and all I can think about is I'm going to get him. I'm going to get him. I'm going to get him of Trump.

And they say, Maxine, please don't say impeachment. And she says impeachment, impeachment, impeachment. And said, after ousting Trump, we're going after Vice President Mike Pence.

Now, this is going to get me in trouble. That type of person should not even be in office. That's not godly.

That's not good. That's sowing a lot of discord. That's sowing a lot of discord.

And then the person comes back and says, well, what about Trump's comments? And I'd say, my advice to him is stay off Twitter. Put some tape right here for six months. Don't say anything.

Stop. But see, this tells me something. After him, we're going after Vice President Mike Pence.

See, this reveals the true heart. Pence hasn't done anything wrong. Pence hasn't shot off the hip.

Pence doesn't have adultery allegations. Pence isn't trying to do this. Why? Because it's the spirit.

They want anything to do with those who are godly, those who want to bring God back into our culture, God back into our government. Do you see that some school districts now are allowing pornography to teach your children, and transgenders are allowing to teach kindergartens to go through a book study on how to turn your gender? Now they're allowing people to male, female, or in the middle, gender neutral. This is wrong.

This is ungodly. This does not please the heart of God. And the pulpit, if we don't say anything, who is? Because I can hear right now, Shane, shut your mouth.

You shouldn't talk about that. You should just talk about the gospel. Well, the gospel affects everything.

The gospel affects my heart. So when I see the murder of innocent children, and there should be rise up in you indignation when you see that the sanctity of marriage is being broken down and trumbled upon, and our little children are being taught what is wicked and ungodly, that should be righteous indignation. When you have leaders in our country stirring up racial division, that should be confronted.

The pulpit used to be the voice of truth. So be careful. Be careful.

Because the judgmental spirit might be rising up in you. Because God gives us different callings, and different ministries. You're going to hear different preachers approach different topics, because God is stirring that.

Not everybody can be expositional, Bible teacher, Genesis through Revelation for the next eight years. That's all we do. We don't talk about any of this other stuff.

Well then, how does it ever get addressed? Well, we'll rely on these good godly leaders that we're putting in office. Maybe, I mean, the priority is the gospel. That's the priority.

And I believe as Christians, we should have a civil discussion. That's why I said earlier this week, I've been praying, Lord, help me have a love for her. I do.

I can honestly say, with the Spirit of God in me, I love this lady. I believe she is just hurt, and has been hurt and hurt, and just needs somebody to love her, and show her the other side. This young gal running against Steve Knight locally, are you aware that she's LGBT? She's going to be over our area.

So I'm not for naming names. I'm just saying, look at the issues. Look at who we're putting in office.

The Bible has something to say about this. I can have a civil discussion with her and say, I love you. I want what's best for you.

But I thoroughly disagree, and I should be given that right to thoroughly disagree the same right that you have to thoroughly disagree. Why is it that when we want to say something, it's intolerant and hate? But

when other groups want to say it, it's free speech. Hmm.

Yeah, we know. Shut up, truth. Shut up, God's Word.

We don't want to hear any of that. So James 2, 8-9, if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, who's James speaking to? Unbelievers? No. There's unbelievers reading it, but the book of James is written to believers.

If you really fulfill the royal law according to scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You will do well. But if you show partiality, I put it in parentheses here.

What is partiality? Unfair bias. So if I have hatred stirring in my heart, if I don't like somebody, and I, see, we're, we're really good at pointing out the big sins that we can see, but we forget about sins of the heart. People can come into church day in and day out and have sins of the heart.

Judgmentalism, arrogance, pride, bitterness, and just, just, just in there so much. And this morning I was up here, we get here at six in the morning, we just worship God for an hour and a half. And that scripture in 2nd Chronicles just leaped out me a portion of that scripture, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.

It's like it just lit up. I felt, Lord, what are you saying? I mean, we're turning from our wicked ways? And I got this thought, no, many are not. Because we think of wicked ways as wicked ways.

Wicked in the Hebrew, if you look it up, it actually means those things that go against the morality and the will of God. So we can come in praising God, singing songs, holding on to racism, holding on to spiritual pride, holding on, even right now there's preference playing a role in judgmentalism. We can hold on to those things, not realizing that those are some wicked ways.

Because the heart, it's what's in man's heart that has to change. So James says, you do well, but if you show partiality, if there's unfair bias, obviously the context is putting more emphasis and friendships into the rich than the poor, and there's a bias there, you commit sin and you are convicted by the law as transgressors. James just called Christians transgressors in this area of issues of the heart.

Now this is interesting. How does hate and hating people, and I know it's a strong word, but let me just use this then, how does feeling an intense or passionate dislike for someone, how does it creep in? Well, we're going to get to that in a minute, but first, the heart, this hatred affects us physically and spiritually. Did you know that? That most heart attacks occur after angry outbursts, strokes, they're linking a lot of these things to hatred in the heart.

Now how does hatred also affect us spiritually in the heart? The Bible talks about bones being rotted, hurting in the bones, our body aching, toxicity, hatred is just toxic to us spiritually and physically. Now I'm preaching to you as a fellow struggler. These things come in to my life as well, but we have to take them to the cross.

Our immune system is weakened, rot to the bones, it's toxic and it brings death. So hatred, this bitterness, this being upset at different political parties or different Christians because they don't believe exactly how your theological beliefs, and I can spot them a mile away. What seminary did you go to? What books do you read? Who are you affiliated with? Where'd you learn from? What'd you glean from? What's your thought on this? Because they're wanting to size you up to see if you fit within their criteria.

Now if they're just looking for genuine beliefs, which you know we teach hard on good theology, it's good to know where someone is theologically speaking, but we have to stop complaining and arguing over the non-essentials if we agree on the essentials. The virgin birth, the inerrancy of scripture, the Christ is the only way, the God the Father, and so many different things. These are essentials that keep us together.

That's why you work towards unity. So I'm going to give you four steps right now. If you need help in this area, I'm hoping everybody says yes we do.

Most of us do unless you're a solid Christian. Email me and tell me how you keep hatred from ever creeping in and judgmentalism from ever creeping in. And when you see a song you don't like up there, oh how could they put that up there? I thought Pastor Shane was solid.

Well how do you work through that? Little information here, I don't prefer some of the songs we do. Did you know that? Probably wouldn't have chose that one. I don't know.

But it's not a hill to die on. It's preference. Does it honor God? Like the prodigal son we sang, Abba Father, it's a new song and I can picture God running like the father running.

Here's the robe, here's your life back prodigal son, come home. So to me it's saying prodigal son, just come home. Just come home, I'm waiting, I'm willing, the robe again, the goodness you had, the blessings that you had, just come back, it's a good good father, Abba Father, I love you, thank you.

So see that song might minister to you if you're a prodigal. But if you've lived in a leave it to beaver home and you've got all these great things and you've never experienced difficulties in life, you might not appreciate some songs. So we have to stop allowing preference to dictate our attitudes.

So number one, recognize what unites us, was my first point. Recognize what unites us. But then I had to correct that.

We have to recognize and apply. Because so many people, when I read the scripture, people go, oh amen brother, well you're not applying it. You are, but just general, right? I'm generally speaking now.

We have to apply the word of God because as we learn many times, I've taught this many times, where does the power of scripture really come from? In knowing it or in doing it. James says you know it but you don't do it. Be doers of the word and not hearers, deceiving yourselves, living in deception.

A Christian can live most of their life in deception if they don't apply the word of God. So Ephesians 4, how long did that take me to get there? Oh 30 minutes, that's not too bad. I therefore, Paul's saying I therefore the prisoner, he's the prisoner of the Lord.

So when you're a prisoner, you listen to the officer above you, the correctional officer, right? You're the prisoner. So I'm a prisoner of Christ, what do you want me to do? I beseech you. So he's saying I beg you, I beg you to walk worthy of the calling from which you were called.

So Christ called us out of darkness into light and now we're walking as children of God. So he says walk worthy of that calling. Walk worthy, you've been redeemed, you've been set free.

How dare you sow discord among the brethren? How dare you hold in bitterness and anger and resentment? How dare you fight against the Holy Spirit? Be united in a common cause for Christ. Walk worthy of what and how you've been called. It's very simple but very difficult.

With all, come on Paul, not some, just some lowliness? No, with all lowliness. Look up the word lowly. Does it mean humble? No, a little lower.

Humble, lowly, and gentleness. How you doing so far? With long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And that's why I prayed all week, Lord give me the Spirit because I know many people right now are making excuses in their mind.

That's why the Spirit of God has to convict you and change you and challenge you. Because the defense attorney within, but, no, no, no, but, pretty clear, and it's so funny, I can spot the Pharisees a mile away on Facebook. I'll post something like this, they'll go, yeah, but we've got to stand up for truth.

Of course, but that doesn't make this null and void. It's not the truth that's offending people, it's our attitudes. That's the difference.

The truth will offend. There is no way around that. But how do we carry ourselves? Do we walk worthy of that calling? So there's humility, there's gentleness, there's gentleness is like this, seeking to understand.

Hey, have you thought about this? Okay, I understand. I see where you're coming from. And long suffering, what does long suffering mean? Oh, they're posting that stuff on Facebook again.

Oh, they're saying this again. God, I'm just gonna, long, long suffering. You're gonna suffer long.

That's what the word means. You're gonna suffer long. Means you might not win the argument.

And it was difficult at the event I was at last week. I'm sure it's difficult for them as well. Because we have to, I don't agree.

Long suffering. I don't agree. You have to be gentle.

For example, this whole Kaepernick thing. There's one side to it that says he's standing up and protesting the right way. And I would just say, I just don't think that's the right forum.

I don't think protesting the national anthem is a good idea, because millions have given their lives for the freedoms we now enjoy. See, and that should end the discussion. That's it.

Okay, I see your side don't agree with it. And here's my side. Move on.

But we want to sit there and camp out for 30 minutes. Why? P-R-I-D-E. P-R-I-D-E.

Pride. We want to win. We want to be superior.

We want to get our point across. That's not lowly. That's not gentle.

That's not all long-suffering. See, it's funny. People, when they're making excuses, they'll take what I'm saying and they'll say, oh, he just wants us to be a doormat and just allow.

Really? Have you listened to my sermons? Was I a doormat on Fox News? I still get emails of people so P-O-ed about that. What I just said earlier about our representatives. You think that? Yes.

But it has to come from a gentle heart that's broken before God. How do you find that balance? The only way is to take it to God. Our state should be going to God for answers.

This one cracks me up. I have to speak on this. I have to.

Everybody and the president, I'm sorry, the governor who allowed gay marriage in San Francisco and went against the Supreme Court, he's actually probably going to be your governor if people don't go out and vote, by the way. So you see how important this stuff is? I love the man. I would sit down and have lunch with him and his wife and we would agree to disagree.

I can honestly say that as God is my witness that I love these people, but I have some big, big, big different political issues. Well, his big thing is health care for everyone. We need health care for everyone.

Now, concept, great idea, right? I mean, anybody should be able to get health care if certain things are, but that's not my point. My point is this. Practically speaking, who's going to pay for that? Your children and grandchildren, and you put people into debt.

The best way to do this, now I'm going to get some emails on this, but I'm glad I have the form to say this now. What is causing the problem? Nobody's talking about that. Stop putting junk food on every corner.

Stop feeding the homeless everything all junk food. Stop giving these people food that's causing diabetes and cancer. Get to the root.

They're not taking care of their God-given body. That's how you fix the epidemic. You don't keep throwing money after it.

You start pulling away the things that are causing it. So that's first and foremost where we should look at what's causing this epidemic. Why are so many people sick? So many people needing health care.

Why? Because they're abusing and they're not taking care of this wonderful gift that God has given us. That's the solution, even biblically speaking, to take care of the temple. Now, people say, well, that won't fix everything.

Absolutely right. Absolutely. But you can fix a large majority of the issues by taking care of what God has given us.

So throwing money at it won't fix it. It's actually contributing to it because we're not feeding and consuming what we need to consume. See, there's issues for all these things.

Bearing, bearing with one another and love. I just have to bear with them, right? Many people are going to grace fest. You're going to run into people you don't agree with, right? You're probably going to get there.

Oh, shoot. Don't act like you don't do that. There's, oh, darn it.

And we just, but bear with them. Because here's what happens. I notice when I say, Lord, this attitude is not right.

And I talk to them, I'm filled again with the Spirit of God. If I leave with that bitterness, it continues to grow. Now, there are some people you might want to avoid.

I'm not saying that. But it has to be the heart of wanting to bear with them. So let's start bearing with each other and long suffering and not getting into these little petty arguments about different things.

So ask this question before you post something on Facebook, before you talk to somebody, before you do Twitter. Are you sowing discord? Are you purposely sowing discord? Honest confession, I have done that purposely before. They say this.

Oh, I'm saying that. Going right tit for tat. That's where that comes from.

And say, Lord's not pleased with that. So we have to recognize and apply the Scripture. This would take away most of the civil unrest between Christians right here.

And then we also have to recognize the facts. I've already talked a lot about this before. We are not our enemies.

Fellow Christians are not our enemies. The enemy is our enemy. And he's using the media to influence a lot of people.

Be careful who you listen to be careful where you get your facts from. Be careful what information you are allowing to gauge allowing to change your heart. Right? CNN, direct report, Huffington Post, Fox News, that's how we're gauging things.

That's how we're being fed. And that's what's coming out. Now, if you want to stay, you know, up to speed with things, that's good.

But you have to recognize the facts. And then number three. Number two, if you want a Scripture for that, there's a lot in Proverbs about wisdom is the principal thing.

Get wisdom and all you're getting, get understanding, and she will exalt you. What is wise according to God's Word? What is the facts? Hear both sides. See, that's also biblical.

Proverbs says, hear both sides before conforming a judgment in a matter. What do we do? We hear the side we like, and not the other side. We have to hear both sides.

And then number three, recognize this flows right into that. Recognize who influences you. Are you fueling the fires? Are we cherry picking videos that support our cause? If we truly care about unity, why aren't we promoting both sides? Or why aren't we, if we truly care about unity, why aren't we applying Ephesians four? Why aren't we walking in this long suffering bearing with one another? Because that's really where change is going to take place.

I'm convinced the longer I live, God doesn't need a whole huge army of people. That would be great. He's looking for his people to humble themselves and pray and seek his face.

If we're here in the morning praying and worshiping, God's not going to say, oh, there's only 40. Let me go find a 4,000 group setting. And you probably won't get that many people at prayer meetings and worship.

See, that's how we're going to, that's what I brought up at this event. I said, why don't the next time we get together, have it be a night of prayer and worship, where we come together on a common theme, that being Christ. That's how you build bridges back.

And I want to remind you of this, the context of Ephesians four is how to be strengthened with the Holy Spirit, how to be rooted and grounded in love, and how to be filled with the fullness of God. It's interesting that word fullness is no vacancy. There's nothing else coming in to the heart, to be filled with the fullness

of God.

Here's how you have to do it. Most people come to church, I want more of the Holy Spirit. I want to be used of God, but they're not full of the Holy Spirit, because they're holding on to many of these wrong attitudes, many of these wrong things that are deeply rooted.

And I've noticed this about talking about love. And when I say we need to be rooted and grounded in love, we all say, hey man, saying it's easy. But what's the hard part? Being rooted and grounded in love.

Love is so amazing, that you'll begin to weep for your enemies, instead of be mad at them. You'll begin to run towards reconciliation, instead of run from it. Love, and here's why love has been challenging for me, because when I apologize, or when I do something, and we want reconciliation, the other person doesn't.

Does it ever bother you, or just me? The other person, what, Lord, they have to. Well, if they're not doing it, I'm not doing it. I'm holding in all this bitterness towards them.

I'm resentful. God says, no, you just work on you. You just work on you, what I've called you to do.

The other person might not respond. And I've, you know, noticed that often God will use that to really test my heart. See, it's easy to love your enemies.

I mean, sorry, it's easy to love your friends, the Bible talks about. It's easy, not easy to love your enemies. It's easy to say, oh, I forgive you, and let's move forward, when they're both reciprocal, when they're saying the same thing.

But when the other person acts like they didn't do anything wrong, it's all your fault. I'm not taking ownership on this one. Well, how dare you? I'm not either.

Well, here we go again. Problem is not solved, it's not fixed. So as you submit to that, as you love them through that, God will fill you with his spirit.

And there's, especially in hyper Pentecostal churches and charismatic churches, there's this, just this oddness about the Holy Spirit, that it just has to do with weird stuff, or just power. And I believe in the Holy Spirit's power. But the true fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, and boldness, and meekness, and gentleness.

That's the true, true filling of the Holy Spirit. Is boldness, and love. And a person who's broken before, it's not shouting, and up and down, and people praying for this, and all these things.

That's part of it. But I guess here's why I say, I see people acting like they're full of the Spirit, in certain settings. But when it comes to actually applying it, you don't see the Spirit in them.

They're just as angry. They're cussing. They're just as mad.

They're just as bitter. They're just as resentful. They're just as arrogant.

They might have the wrong Spirit in them. Just saying. So finally, we have to recognize our only hope.

If you're in the same boat as I am, and you want change, you want to be different, an act of the will won't just, won't change it. That's a good first step, because we have to say, God, I want this. But we have to submit to the work of the Spirit.

So when we're offended, we have to let it go. How are you going to develop patience if you're not tested with things that will try your patience? How are you going to be a forgiving person if you're never wronged? See, we're tested with these things in order for us to change. And unity is not compromising the truth.

I want to make that clear. And I did, I wrote this down, I guess, maybe for my own desires here and understanding and pondering. But where are the prayer meetings and coming together versus bickering and complaining? Where is that at? That's what we need.

So again, Paul says, I'm a prisoner of the Lord, come in lowliness, gentleness, long suffering, bearing with one another, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. God blesses humble vessels. If we're always angry and divisive, be assured that pride is at the forefront.

There's hatred there, there might be hatred brewing. And as with everything else, action must take place. Action must take place.

Almighty moves of God that I've ever read about, I've seen the Bible, that I've seen, experienced myself, almighty moves of God, changing a person's life begin with action on the part of the hearer. The hearer has to take action on what they know to be right. It's not just if my people just wait there.

If my people humble themselves and turn from their wicked way. So that's my plea to you this morning. If there's something brewing in your heart, if you're upset at these issues and holding that in, whether it's senators, whether it's congress, president, whether it's the members of the church, whether it's friends, whether it's family, if God's convicting you, take action and publicly, not with us all, but privately, but publicly here, but privately to God, denounce it.

Say, God, this is wrong. This is wrong. I need to be filled again with your Spirit.

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