

Weekly Message Study Guide

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Date _____ Speaker _____

VALUE EVERYONE | 12:21 | Week 2 | October 25

Romans 12:3-8; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:7-31; Ephesians 4:1-6; 4:11-13; 1 Cor 12: 25-26

These study guides are designed for individual or group study but highly encouraged to be experienced in community with a small group or other friends on the journey with Jesus.

CONTEXT | Remember Paul is writing to a metropolitan church body. They undoubtedly have a diverse membership with people ranging in wealth, education and life experience. They were under Roman law, another empire vying for their allegiance. Further, the church included a diametrically opposed combination of former Jews and former Gentiles who now held together one life changing belief in common--that Jesus was the Messiah, their Savior and Lord. Paul is pleading to the church "Be ONE in Christ--that is the most important thing".

Last week we looked at "do not be conformed".

- This past week, what ways did you notice culture, news, "Empire storyline" trying to conform you?
- How did you respond? Were you able to bring the "Kingdom storyline" in focus? Talk about it.

Romans 12:3-5 | Imagine a person with the characteristics or the attitudes you most fear, abhor or disagree with sitting next to you. How do you feel? This is what Paul is confronting in the Roman church. Former Jews and Gentiles, an unimaginably huge cultural difference, now united in faith and one church in Christ Jesus.

- What is Paul's opening appeal?
- What is "sober judgement"?
- How would you approach such a judgement about yourself?

James 1:5 | A sober judgement, without conceit OR false modesty, is a challenge. James calls us to ask God for wisdom.

- How have you discerned what your capabilities or gifts are?
- How would you feel asking God for wisdom in this context?
- How does the "Empire storyline" get in the way here?

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For What Purpose? | Paul's plea for unity and oneness is not unique to the church in Rome. Quickly read his plea to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4: 1-6; 4:11-13) and the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

- Compare and contrast these passages; how does a personal "sober judgement" play out in these passages?

Philippians 2:1-5 | Paul is fighting for a cause in the church. Dis-unity grieves the Holy Spirit. He is seeking to bring the church to a higher calling than taking care of their individual needs. He is describing a unity that transcends the huge gaps in their background (Jew and Gentile) and is more important than the political or social setting that surrounds the church. (Sound familiar?)

- What is the motivation that Paul calls us to?
- How can that happen within our Church? Talk about the evidence you see.
- Share about what find gets in the way in your own life?

Consider Better | In vs, 3 change the word order to "consider better" others. In this time of strain, politics, COVID and lack of "normalcy" what are your natural tendencies? I'm sure answers are all over the map. Paul is calling the churches to "consider better".

- How can you alter your responses to the current strains? What have you tried? Share it with the group.
- What can you pray for each other and our church towards living into the unity Paul is calling us to?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK | God's call to Unity is a great challenge to our culture of individualism and our current state of dis-unity. Spend time this week reading the scriptures listed above. Choose one each day and reflect on the priorities that are underlying Paul's plea in each one. Ask these questions:

- How does the passage impact you? What instruction do you hear?
- What would it mean to you to receive that kind of community?
- What would it mean for you to give that kind of community?

Pray that God would work in the midst of your group, our church and the Church worldwide to move toward unity and grace.