Better Together-Humility

Ephesians 4: 1-6

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Picture of Paul in Rome as prisoner

**The old Man is weary…**

 10,000 miles of travel in the ancient world

 2 Cor. 11: 24-28 — Paul’s sufferings

**The old man, Paul the Apostle, is imprisoned in Rome**

 Now afforded the chance to think, converse, write…

**One of his letters is Ephesians.**

Many argue that this is Paul’s best work, providing a summary of the message he has been proclaiming.

Cementing him as not only the greatest missionary the church has ever known, but also the greatest theologian.

**Ephesus is a top three city of his day.**

Only Rome and Alexandria are larger in the Roman empire but Ephesus may be the most important at the time. It was wealthy, pluralistic, advanced, marketplace for goods, thoughts, religion, and under the protection of the mighty Roman Empire.

**Ephesus in many ways mirrors our modern world**

**Paul had begun a church there**, but then left for Jerusalem, was subsequently arrested there and eventually appealed to Rome. Because of his appeal, he was sent to Rome.

**Now under a sort of house arrest,** but still bound with a chain, he writes.

In the letter of Ephesians, **Paul writes about being given the truth about something God did that has changed everything.**

Here is a summary of his letter:

1. This thing that God did impacts our pasts
2. This thing that God did impacts present
3. This thing that God did impacts our future

**What is this thing that God did?**

**This thing that God did is Jesus Christ.**

God’s own Son, the Messiah has come and his life, teaching, death, and resurrection changes everything.

Jesus changes our pasts (Eph. 2: 8-9) NIV on screen

Jesus brings us together (Eph. 2: 14, 17-18) NIV on screen

Jesus reshapes our future (Eph. 4: 1-3) NIV on screen

Paul isn’t this excited over an idea or a fad.

**[This is a total life reorientation]**

What’s more, Paul declares that it is not only possible, but **essential for every person** to experience it.

When they do, it changes everything about the way they live.

In **Chapter 4**, Paul begins to make some **application.**

It’s as if he is **coming to grips with his mortality** and now is trying to **leave something tangible** to his churches to shape them after he is gone.

Read Eph. 4: 1- 6, The Message

1. Get on the right path

“Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life”

2. Do it together

"Humility, pouring ourselves out for each other, doing acts of love, quick to mend fences, staying together outwardly and inwardly”

3. Remember what unites you

“One Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all…”

**Better Together Explanation:**

Better Together is our theme for the next few weeks.

It is a reminder that Central Church has to be like the Ephesian church:

—On the right path

—All of us working together without divisions

—Clear on what unites us

The words “Better Together” will stand for 2 things over the next few weeks.

1. August sermon series where our pastors rotate into each worship venue demonstrating the beauty in a church with multiple people groups represented.
2. A change in the way we do church on Sundays

Current Structure:

9 AM Worship Service and some Sunday School classes

10:30 AM Worship Service and some Sunday School classes

10:30 Hispanic Worship Service

10:30 African Worship Service

Evening Brazilian Worship Service

This has been the basic service time structure since 2013

It was adopted then to provide for growth in Sunday School

Two unintentional and unforeseen impacts have become apparent:

1. Though the structure was chosen to provide growth in Sunday School we have not seen that.
2. English Worship Services have a feeling of separation because of our structure. Folks have had to choose a worship service based on their preference for a Sunday School class or vice versa.

The “Better Together Plan” is our best effort to reverse that trend and remove that unintended division in our Sunday Structure.

So, after over a year of study by the Sunday School and Small Groups committee of our church board crunching numbers and looking at trends; many discussions with our staff, working closely with our multicultural ministries; and after a unanimous vote of our church board in our July board meeting, we will be instituting a Sunday service structure change on October 7th, of this year.

Starting October 7th, our Better Together Structure will be as follows:

8:30 AM — Worship Service

9:45 AM — Formation Groups (our new name for all discipleship ministries at Central)

11:00 AM — Worship Service

Our Multicultural Ministries leaders are in full support of this schedule as well and will meet accordingly.

This plan removes the unintended division, and provides opportunity for us to be together in several ways:

1. We will have opportunity to choose a worship service based on our preferred time or to choose a service to worship together with our families/friends
2. We will have opportunity to be together in Formation Groups (new name for Sunday School classes) at 9:45 AM

That feeling that we have 2 English speaking congregations who seldom mix will be removed and we can all experience being Better Together.

The Banners at the entrances will help to spread the word, but we also have these bracelets for everyone connected to Central Church. If you forget any of these details, they can literally be on your wrist. The date, the service times, even the word “together” in all of our current language groups is there to remind us. The times for the services are embossed on the inside of the bracelets and you can get them at the entrances to the sanctuary following the service today. We hope that you will take one and wear it so that you can help us spread the word, but also so that you can have a reminder to pray for this upcoming change.

A concentrated effort at a robust small group ministry is planned for February of 2019 to help provide even more Formation Groups that meet throughout the week.

Some of you will have questions about the worship services. They will be almost identical with at most one song difference. We are working diligently to provide Spirit led worship experiences that are the same for all of our folks worshiping in English at Central Church. Our choir will continue its ministry and we hope to even see increased participation in our Worship Arts department as people will now have the freedom to be a part with out missing out on their discipleship times.

**Will you pray with us?** We need the help of the Lord for a change like this.

**Will you plan with us?** Start making plans now for your family so that you can take full advantage of this new structure.

**Will you practice with us**…practice the principles that Paul laid out for the Ephesian church.

Let’s follow Jesus’ leadership and walk confidently ahead. We really are Better Together.

As we close our service today, we will participate in the practice that has always united the people who follow Jesus. No matter the era, no matter the geography, we have:

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all.”

**Communion Liturgy:**

The act of communion is a sacrament that Jesus began. Jesus taught his followers that this act would be a way to always remember him. For more than 2000 years, the followers of Jesus have practiced this sacrament proclaiming the life, death, resurrection, and eventual return of Christ.

We believe that communion is a moment when God’s grace is uniquely present, so it is appropriate for anyone with a sincere and repentant heart to receive the bread and juice. Coming to this table is an act of faith and the Spirit of Christ meets us here. So with the people of God in every generation we declare: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

**Let’s Pray:**

Holy God, we gather at this your table in the name of Jesus, your Son. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these elements. Make them to be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world, the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Unify us, Lord, with one another and may we carry on your work until you come again. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Now if you would direct your attention to the screens, let’s pray together the Lord’s Prayer.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Say:**

On the night our Lord was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Likewise, when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, and said: “Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.” Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Invite to come forward (left to right, receive elements— gluten free elements are available at every station— dip them into the juice, eat, and return to your seats.**