



**COMMUNITY ALIVE! QUESTIONS for the week of April 25, 2021**  
**Sermon: "Title" by Rev. Dr. Doug Rumford**  
**Ephesians 4:1-16**

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**Theme/concept**

In a culture that values self-reliance and heroic individualism, Jesus calls his followers to the radical alternative of "active interdependence." Like the parts of a body, each person plays an essential role for the well-being of all. An African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." We mature in Christ as we move "from me to we," and confidently rely on one another.

**Icebreaker**

Are you more drawn to participating in individual sports and activities, or those involve a team or group? Why?

**Reflecting on the sermon**

How did this week's sermon affect the way you think about self-reliance?

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people."

<sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions. <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

### **Reviewing the Scripture**

1. What are some of the attitudes and behaviors that constitute worthy lives (Ephesians 4:1-2)? Which of those come easily to you? Which ones are a struggle?
2. In Ephesians 4:1 and 4:4, Paul uses the plural form of “you.” Why is that significant?
3. The “grace” in Ephesians 4:7 refers to the distinctive service each person has been given to perform for the effective functioning of the whole body of Christ. What is the potential risk of focusing on certain gifts and excluding others?
4. Paul seems to be describing unity as a future state in Ephesians 4:11-13. Why do you think we struggle to achieve unity? What attitudes or behaviors get in the way of that ideal?
5. In Ephesians 4:15, love and truthfulness are connected as prerequisites to growth in community. We often think of “speaking the truth in love” as saying hard things, but how could it also affirm what is right and good?

6. In Ephesians 4:11-16, who provides all that people need to become the fully functioning body? Why does that matter?

### **Building community**

1. If you drew a line that showed self-reliance at one end and active interdependence at the other, where would place yourself along that line? (Think of your natural tendency, or your default behavior, and not your ideal state.) Can you give an example of how that plays out in your life?
  
2. Moving clockwise around your circle, describe one positive thing that the person to your left contributes to your group (or to the church).
  
3. In her book *Living Into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us*, Christine D. Pohl writes, “The best testimony to the truth of the gospel is the quality of our life together.” What are we doing in our church, family, or community that might draw people to the kingdom? What might be pushing them away?

### **Practicing community—a few ideas**

1. Offer to help someone who’s used to doing things on their own—perhaps an elderly neighbor, a single parent, or someone who lives alone. The assistance could take many forms, from picking up a bag of groceries to moving a heavy piece of furniture. You can do this as a group, or as

individuals. If you choose the latter, report back to the group about your experience. And if you're the one doing things alone, consider asking your group members for help with a task.

2. Participate as a group in one of Trinity's Community Alive! Serve Days, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays at the Double R Ranch, the Orange County Rescue Mission's new ministry location. Visit <https://trinityconnection.com/serve/> to sign up. There will be plenty of work for everyone who shows up, regardless of skill level!
3. Brainstorm ways that your group can create a culture of gratitude for one another, and for our shared life in Christ. What are some ways of noticing the good, rather than focusing on envy, criticism, dissatisfaction, or grumbling?

### **Closing prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for bringing us together, and for giving us a variety of gifts that work together to build up the entire body of Christ. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to dispel any attitudes and assumptions that get in the way of authentic community. May we rely on and strengthen one another, and in so doing, become a joyful witness to the world. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.