

# Resisting the System: How to Live the Jesus Way

## Part 2: Jesus' Strategy for a Divided Culture

Ephesians 4:1-6

**Summary:** In a divided culture, Jesus shows us how to resist with love and unity.

### Main Ideas:

There's a system of division in our world.

We're trapped between outrage and apathy.

In a divided world, God has called us to resist the system of division... together.

We resist the system by walking with a community rooted in God's love.

The Jesus Way is the exact opposite of what we've been told "works."

Pride always isolates. Humility always invites.

Unity is created by the Holy Spirit. Our job is to maintain, preserve, and mature it.

Unity starts when we say.... "You don't have to think like me to walk with me."

The foundation of true unity is an identity in God and what he has done.

Unity isn't ignoring differences, it's saying... This isn't going to divide us.

The system can't silence love that refuses to leave the table.

### Invitation:

Choose to recommit to unity within disagreement:

- Ask: Who do I need to forgive... or stop writing off?
- Commit to staying at the table.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this week's message?
2. Of the "outrage" or "apathy" responses mentioned in the sermon, which one are you more prone to—and why?
3. Reread Ephesians 4:1-6. What do you think unity—not uniformity—looks like in real-life relationships, especially with those we disagree with?
4. Who is one person in your life right now you tend to avoid because of disagreement—and what might it look like to pursue unity with them this week?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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### Transcript:

**Intro:** Menti- This or That... Getting more extreme (Ex. coke or pepsi to trump is the savior or trump is the devil)

**WE:** Did you feel the shift?

We started out fun, then suddenly we're holding our breath.

Why? B/c right now it seems like everyone is divided, loud, and angry.

- Feel it when cousin Eddie starts talking about “The Government,”
- When that coworker starts ranting about, “What are we going to do about ‘them’?”
- Your stomach starts to tighten... fight or flight kicks in.
- Start wondering how to say the right thing... or how to get out of the conversation w/o making it worse.

And underneath it all, you just feel tired.

- Tired of the noise
- Tired of the outrage

Here’s the reality, like we talked about last week... There’s a system of division in our world.

- Babylon, the world, THEM.
- Thrives on tribalism, suspicion, and fear

The system doesn't just demand we pick a side but declare our full allegiance

- Pick wrong and you’re out.

So most of us choose between 2 options... We’re trapped between outrage and apathy.

For some, the pressure to speak up, post, argue, fight, and defend feels constant... and eventually crippling.

Others are just tired... tired of being lied to, tired of being manipulated, tired of the noise.

- So we withdraw quietly... choosing silence in order to survive.

And this system of division has left us and our neighbors isolated, starving for authentic connection, and exhausted by relational landmines.

It has broken families.

- Turned neighbors and coworkers into enemies
- And made every opinion feel like a ticking time bomb waiting to go off in your inbox, group text, or home.

The system still promises... pick the right side, and you’ll find unity.

But has it EVER delivered? Look around. It never has.

But there’s a better way. A totally different way to resist this system of division

- Not by selling out to a side
- Not by attacking, and not by retreating.
- But by practicing real unity... unity that isn’t about agreement, but about allegiance to Jesus and love for each other.

We call it the Jesus way.

- It starts with being rooted in God’s love (last week)
- And it thrives in others-focused, God made unity.

See, the church wasn't created to just add to the noise of all the outrage and division.

- The church's role isn't to pick either red or blue, or even to be in the middle of all the fighting

That's NOT the resistance Jesus calls us to... Not the life he offers.

The church was created to be an alternative to the division... not just an alternative but THE solution

Jesus invites us to join a whole different kind of resistance.

Where we resist, not by picking sides or by staying silent, but by practicing real unity.

A unity built through humility, courage, and love... a unity that thrives even when real differences exist.

That has always been the Church's mission.

In fact, in the divided imperial culture of the 1st century, the Apostle Paul wrote to a small community of JF's in the wealthy, idol-soaked city of Ephesus...

And in the middle of the letter, he tells them... In a divided world, God has called us to resist the system of division... together.

So, let's step back 2000 years and see how resisting the system hasn't changed...

**GOD:** Ephesians 4:1 (NLT) *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

"Therefore"... b/c of what he wrote earlier, what we saw last week,

- B/c you are rooted in God's love and practicing enjoying God's love daily...

Lead a life worthy of your calling... for you were called by God.

What is this calling?

- To pledge allegiance to Jesus and live as the people of God on earth now
- Bring God's love and peace to the world, one choice and one person at a time.

For years I thought Paul was just saying..."I should try to be a better person."

- Like, this was just about me working harder to behave better.

But I missed the point... b/c I read this like Paul was writing to a person... He's not, he's writing to a community of people...

- The you's are plural.

This call isn't just to be a good person... It's a call to resistance... together.

The world, the system says, "Look out for yourself... make yourself worthy of respect, honor, be right, and win."

The Jesus way is about the community of JF's walking in allegiance to Jesus... together.

The system's way is to be a lone ranger holding out against what you think is wrong in the world... Be louder. Be stronger.

- The system is designed to wear you down as you try to stand alone... maybe winning arguments but losing friends over and over.
- Or to overwhelm you so you stay silent and ineffective.

Think about this... Maybe you're not exhausted right now because you're doing it wrong or losing... maybe you're exhausted b/c you're doing it alone.

Paul says we resist the system by walking with a community rooted in God's love.

What makes the Jesus way and community so different?

What does resistance actually look like when the problem is relational?

How do we stand out in our divided world without burning out or shutting down?

Paul's answer might surprise you...

*Eph. 4:2-3 (NLT) Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*

"So stupid. That would never work in the real world."

When was the last time you saw a politician win, someone become a CEO, someone "win" by being humble, gentle, and patient with other people's faults?

We all know that to win, you have to be ruthless, you have to be loud enough to be heard, you have to fight for your way, you have to demand excellence and perfection from everyone around you.

But what has that thinking created?

- A divided world full of selfish, burned-out, and burned-up people, who can't maintain any type of real deep connection with others.

Paul says the real way to win, the Jesus way, is the exact opposite of what we've been told "works."

How?

Humble: Thinking of yourself less.

- It stands in stark contrast to the arrogance and pride that permeate our world
- Pride always isolates. Humility always invites.

Gentle: Not weak.

- This is strength under control
- When a burly farmer saves a baby bunny from the blades of a tractor
- It shines out against our culture's background of self-assertion, rudeness, and harshness.
- It means having our emotions under control.
- Not just shoving down our feelings, pretending we're never angry or passionate.
- Instead of being in a constant state of anger/fighting... a gentle person who is controlled by God, who is following the Jesus way, is angry at the right times and in the right ways

Patient: Not quick to anger or frustration

- It is the self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate against a wrong
- It never gives up because it endures to the end even when things are difficult... even in the face of serious disagreements.
- Does not react in self-defensive ways, but responds in compassionate ways for the other

Bearing with one another in love: Knowing we are all imperfect, and choosing to live in loving tolerance with each other.

And then Paul says something interesting... "make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit."

- Other translations say it a bit better: Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit

It's so interesting b/c he doesn't say to CREATE unity through the Spirit.

- He says to keep it or MAINTAIN it.

Unity is created by the Holy Spirit. Our job is to maintain, preserve, and mature it.

And if we don't, b/c we're giving in to and relying on pride, arrogance, anger, and fighting every chance we get ... we will lose it.

- And become just like everyone else.
- Isolated, angry, and an ineffective voice, just adding to the angry noise around us.

True unity isn't built on agreement,

- It doesn't come from shared politics, theology, world views...
- It comes from the Holy Spirit, it is formed by love, and it is sustained by humility, gentleness, and patience.

We don't need to agree to be united. We don't have to solve every division to show love.

- We don't need to hit it off right away or be each other's favorite people.

Unity doesn't come from chemistry... It's maintained by commitment.

The system tells us that disagreeing means dividing.

In the Way of Jesus... disagreeing means we get to practice and illustrate true love.

Unity starts when we say.... "You don't have to think like me to walk with me."

Ask yourself... what is more important... to be loving or to prove you are right?

- To win the argument or to win the relationship?

That might sound idealistic... but unity is deeper than just warm feelings.

We can't just say we agree to disagree and everything will be fine.

What is it that lets us rise above all the noise and show the world there can be true unity in the face of real disagreements?

**Eph. 4:4-6** *For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

If you have chosen to follow Jesus... THIS is what binds us.

One Spirit... One Savior... One Father

One body, us, his people.

The foundation of true unity is an identity in God and what he has done.

This unity isn't a concept. It's the Trinity in action.

- The Father adopts. The Son Unites. The Spirit Sustains.

Look around. None of us is here b/c we voted the same way or see every issue the same way.

We are here b/c the same God created us in his image, the same Jesus died and rose for us, and the same Spirit binds us together as he transforms us from the inside out.

This isn't forced sameness. This isn't fake smiles...

It's not built on agreement... it's built on identity.

This is deeper than who you voted for, your background, race, gender, or orientation.

The system of division says, "Pick a side and cut off anyone who doesn't affirm all of your views perfectly."

Jesus says, "You already are one b/c of my life, death, and resurrection, and b/c my Spirit is living inside of you.

- You are already one... now act like it."

So here's the question... what does that look like for YOU... this week... to resist the system by maintaining and maturing unity?

**YOU:** This week, let me invite all of us to choose to recommit to unity within disagreement.

Ask: Who do I need to forgive... or stop writing off?

- Have you put a view over a "YOU"?
- Maybe it's time to reenter the conversation, but with humility.

Maybe it's a text, an email, an invite to dinner... not to convince each other... but b/c you share Jesus.

- Not to change minds but to change how the world sees unity.

Commit to staying at the table.

Unity isn't ignoring differences, it's saying... This isn't going to divide us.

- We can disagree and still be in the same family

**WE:** Imagine what could happen?

What if your family could disagree and still enjoy each other?

What if we could discuss serious disagreements and walk away filled with love and peace... even if we don't come to a consensus?

This is what our world, country, and social circles are longing for.

This is what God has called us to discover, enjoy, and share with our neighbors.

This is what we are being transformed to shine light as a beacon on the darkest night to a broken and angry world.

This is the life Jesus offers.

And we are not alone. Jesus has already gone before us. He has already prayed for us.

**John 17:20-21** *"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."*

Let us be one so the world will know and find love, peace, and hope in Jesus.

This unity doesn't come easy. But that's okay... b/c easy was never the goal.

Love that sticks proves something...

The system can't silence love that refuses to leave the table.