

**Discussion Starter #1:** What are some causes of drama and tension in a marriage? In a family? In a church? In a workplace? In a friendship?

**Key Passage:** *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <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.”* (Ephesians 4:1-6)

In this text, the apostle Paul tells us that we who call ourselves Christians should walk (that means to order our behavior and lives) in a way that honor’s God good work in our lives. The word “worthy” (v.1) comes from a Greek word that means “having the weight of another thing.” Think of an old set of scales with a bar across the top, with two containers hanging by a chain from the ends of the bar. In one of the containers is the life God expects a Christian to live; in the other container is our life. Paul is saying that the two should be equal—our life ought to weigh as much as the life God expects us to live.

**Discuss:** How can an unbalanced life in which a Christian’s behavior does not match his/her beliefs bring tension to relationships?

Paul clarifies God’s expectations of how we are to maintain this balance between our conduct and our convictions:

### 1. Humility (v.2a)

In the ancient culture, humility was not considered a virtue; rather it was a cowering, cringing approach to life which was to be avoided. Yet, Christ demonstrated humility as a quality to be desired, and he challenged us to live in humility.

Humility comes from: 1) Having a proper understanding of God that recognizes Him as being the Creator of the world, the One who is above all other powers and things, and 2) Having a proper understanding of ourselves that recognizes our weaknesses, inadequacies, and shortcomings.

**Discuss:** In what ways did Christ demonstrate humility?

**Discuss:** How can a proper understanding of who God is defuse tension in a relationship?

**Discuss:** How can a proper understanding of yourself defuse tension in a relationship?

## 2. Gentleness (v.2b)

Gentleness has nothing to do with timidity or weakness; rather, it describes a person who has his emotions, thoughts, tongue, and desires *under control*. The word was used in Paul's day to describe a wild animal such as a horse that is broken and tamed. The animal still has strength and power but is under the control of his trainer. The horse can run just as fast as before, but he runs only when and where his master tells him to run. Similarly, we place our strength under our Lord's control.

**Discuss:** In what ways did Christ demonstrate gentleness?

**Discuss:** How can gentleness – power under control – bring peace to a strained relationship with someone?

## 3. Patience (v.2c)

The word Paul uses here describes a person's reaction to another person who has mistreated him. Patience describes a person with a long fuse, a person who refuses to retaliate, a person who bears with anything anyone can do to him/her.

**Discuss:** Clearly, patience is an essential trait for anyone who wants to enjoy a peaceful relationship. How can a person develop this important trait of patience?

## 4. Love (v.2d)

The word love comes from the Greek word *agape*, which means a kind of love that seeks the highest good of another person, regardless of what the person does. This kind of love is not based upon feelings; rather it grows out of a commitment to love other people in the same way that Jesus loves us.

**Discuss:** How would you describe Christ's love for you?

**Discuss:** How can remembering the way Christ loves you motivate you to love others in the same way?

## 5. Unity (v.3-6)

Paul focuses here on the concept of unity among Christians in one body of Christ (v.4a), in one Spirit (v.4b), in one hope (v.4c), in one Lord (v.5a), in one faith (v.5b), and in one Father (v.6) as the foundational motivation for us to get along in peace.

**Discuss:** How can Christians respect and appreciate the diversity of gifts, callings, and ministries among fellow believers while still maintaining spiritual oneness?

**Discuss:** In verse 6, Paul emphasizes God's sovereignty ("*over all*"), omnipotence ("*through all*"), and omniscience ("*in all*"). How can each of these three descriptions of God's sovereignty contribute to unity among Christians?