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Growing up, I enjoyed playing a variety of sports. My favorite sports were team-based, those in which the difference between victory and defeat was the effort of the group rather than one individual. To this day, I love watching teams that excel at working in a unified effort to win in their realm of competition.

Today, in the Grace Administration, believers all over the world are a part of the greatest team that has ever been assembled: the Body of Christ. On this spiritual “dream team” are believers from a plethora of nations, cultures, personalities, languages, and perspectives. Can such a diverse group of individuals be unified? We have but to read the beginning of Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:1-3:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We see that God has exhorted us to walk with certain renewed-mind qualities so that we can endeavor to keep, or exert ourselves to safeguard and maintain, the unity of the spirit. God wants us to safeguard what He has already given us: unity. This Body of Christ has the love-fueled ability to stay unified, but how do we do it? Thankfully, Ephesians 4:2 spells out the exact attitude that helps us stay unified on God’s chosen team.

Ephesians 4:2:

*With all **lowliness** and **meekness**, with **longsuffering**, **forbearing one another in love.***

The word “forbearing” in Ephesians 4:2 means to bear up, bear with, endure, hold up, sustain. By forbearing one another in love, we build a strong and unified Body of Christ, a team that is built to win in the spiritual competition. This mentality of forbearing one another in love can be strengthened as we develop the other three qualities in verse 2. Let’s look at these.

In order to be the best for our spiritual team, we put on the mind-set of lowliness (humility of mind). This quality of lowliness, or godly humility, however, does not mean thinking very little of ourselves, or looking down on our lives. It is a true estimate of ourselves according to God’s Word. We see ourselves in light of how God sees us. We can value ourselves highly because of what God says about us, and we can esteem others highly as well because we believe what God says about them. As we walk with lowliness, or humility, in the Body of Christ, we avoid haughty self-interest or esteem built on worldly things. Humility helps us see the true value of our spiritual team and our role in it.

We also need to be meek in order to forbear one another in love. No matter what team I found myself participating on as a young man, one thing was certain: all of my coaches preferred coachability over mere ability. If we’re meek, or coachable, in life, we can cultivate any ability that we may need in order to serve God. Why? Psalms states it beautifully:

Psalms 25:9:

The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

What we know or don’t know is not as important as our willingness to listen and learn. God can teach a believer anything they need to know, and our team is an optimal environment for both learning and instructing.

And if we want to forbear one another and bring out the best in our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, then being long-suffering will also be a tremendous help to us. Contrary to the impression we might get from this word in Ephesians 4:2, being long-suffering does not mean that we suffer for a long time. Isn’t that relieving? To be long-suffering means to be long in patience with people, to have the ability to restrain oneself when provoked. When we are long-suffering with others, we won’t get caught having a “short fuse.” When we’re manifesting an attitude of long-suffering, we are patient with others as they learn how to live the Word and stand strong.

A minister once shared with me that we have a responsibility as sons of God to endure patiently with people's short suits so we can appreciate the benefits of their long suits. It is maintaining an attitude of lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering that opens the door for us to forbear one another in love.

As born-again believers, we have been given a wonderful team to be a part of in this day and time. God has given us a common spiritual purpose and a unity to keep and maintain. We diligently keep that unity by staying humble, meek, and long-suffering. We forbear one another in love to keep the Body of Christ strong, unified, and ready to win in the spiritual competition!

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