

# Strength in Numbers

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## SPEAKERS

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Have you ever read a text or an email too quickly? And then you find later when you're rereading it, you're sort of like, Oh, I didn't see that in there the first time, or I overlook that. And the reality is, there are times that we read stuff way too fast, and we miss important details. And I think there's a tendency to do that, especially when it comes to Scripture. But in particular, when it comes to some of the New Testament letters, and other words, if you think of different letters like Ephesians, they begin with a very short introduction. person might indicate who's writing it who it's going to. And then you get to the end and there's often some grief Some final instructions. But I think we often tend to speed read through those parts. It's sort of like we're thinking, yeah, I know it's there. But it's not really that important. The good stuff comes in between the beginning and the end. So I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter six. And we've been going through the entire letter of Ephesians. And it would have been tempting to end this series last Sunday. Because if you think about it, we we were talking about the spiritual armor of God. And it was kind of ending with the importance of prayer and how prayer is integral to that armor being put on and being effective. And then you look at your Bible and you kind of notice verses 21 through 24 simply says final greetings. But if All scripture is God breathed, and All scripture is given for our instruction and encouragement, that means that even in these final greetings That is just as important and as much weight as everything that preceded it. And so it's worthy of us to stop and say, What does God want us to know, from this final greetings that he gives. And I hope to demonstrate that or what I believe God wants us to know, is to stand firm in the faith requires not just that you put on the armor of God and

put it on in prayer, but to stand firm in the faith requires strong Christian Fellowship, that that is integral to what Paul wants these churches and wants us to know. So if you're in Ephesians, chapter six, you'll notice the verse begins with the mention of tiki that he gets is probably not a household name to you or me. It was not an unusual name in the first century. But what is striking is a couple of details about tickets. And and I want to just remind you first tiki is explicitly like directly mentioned by Paul, in at least four of his letters. There's a possibility he's alluded to and a couple other places, but specifically Paul References tiki, and four of his letters, we can assume that at least there's three letters that tiki delivered on behalf of Paul, and that's a fusions, Colossians, and Philemon which are all written in a relatively close time period. And he may have been involved even in the delivery of two more letters. And then one final fact just related to Chicha guess is on two different occasions. Tickets is going to be brought in to relieve Paul and Timothy of their epistatic duties. In other words, I They've helped plant the church. They've gotten it functioning. And then Paul will say where we need to leave, but we're bringing in two chickens. chickens, the man. Paul doesn't call him that, but I'll refer to him that way. So what is it about tiki? That is helpful for us to know. Well, what I want to show from both Ephesians six, and then the little bit we see in Colossians, four, is the riddle learn about the value of Christian Fellowship, the character of Christian Fellowship, and then the improvement of Christian Fellowship. So the value of it, the character of it, and then what do we mean by the improvement of it? So let's start with simply the value of Christian Fellowship. Remember Paul's writing Ephesians from prison. So even though he does at times, have the liberty of having people come in and visit him, it is clear that his desire to be with other Christians is restricted. And that may explain why he is so aware of the need for Christian Fellowship because he's not able to have that. Like he would desire it. As you notice in this, he's going to send tickets, but he's not just sending him as a letter carrier, which is an important task, but he's sending him with a specific mission, a mission that highlights the value of Christian Fellowship. So look at the verse 21 and 22 teacher, kiss the dear brother, and faithful servant in the Lord will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that we may encourage you. So here's his marching orders. Notice the first one. He I'm sending him to tell you everything I want to check as to fill you in on just how I'm doing that. You might say, well, didn't Paul write a letter to kind of tell them how he's doing? Yes. But what's the difference between someone who sat down with Paul, and spent time with Paul, and then personally going and saying, I can verify here, here's what Paul told me. I can tell you what he looks like. I can tell you what his spirit seemed to be. His attitude was, in other words, he's sending tiki with a undercurrent theme of I understand the value of Christian Fellowship, because you're concerned about me, and I'm concerned about you. So tickets will come and he's going to report to you. He's going to declare to you, there's almost like a press conference. He's gonna come and he'll tell you everything you need. To know, and you can ask him

anything you need to know. Because Ted, you guys as a transparent servant, he's coming to share with you. And we can think of that sharing there are going to be praises like Paul's doing well. He's trusting in God. He's writing letters he's using this time. You know, I've got other letters to deliver. But we can assume he's also going to say, you know, Paul needs our prayers. You know, here's what's going on. Here's the burden that Paul feels about other churches and other believers. But there's another aspect to his mission that highlights the value of Christian Fellowship. You notice as well in verse 22. It says, I'm sending him to you for this very purpose, this intent, and that is that you may know how we are and that he may encourage you now, there's something about The importance of one who delivers a letter that we often fail to take into account in ancient times, the one who delivered the letter was very important for authentication. In other words, he could verify this letter was coming from this person. So he would be able to verify this is legitimate. This is Paul's writing I was there. And we don't know if he even he played a role as being like a scribe or, or writing some of the letter as Paul dictated it, but but he could authenticate who the letter is coming from. The other important task of one who delivered a letter is to fill in the blanks. So in other words, there's questions that might come up. There's there's other information that someone might think of, and say, well, how's you know, how did Paul look to you? What do you think Paul meant by this given the fact that the trip That Ted, you guys would have made would have required months of travel. many would argue that over the course of that time, he would have probably committed the letter to memory. And just imagine him arriving, and just sharing this, saying, here's what Paul has to say to you. And just speaking it, that he had so taken that message in what a picture it is to us, though of, of the importance of Christian Fellowship here. Paul says, I'm sending him not just to give you some Report, I'm not sending a merely so you would feel sorry for me. I want you to know what God is doing. I want you to know how I am doing as a servant. I want you to know the needs of the church and Ephesus, and in other areas where this letter is hopefully going to be circulated. But then as we read in verse 22, I want to encourage you, literally, I want to come alongside of you. And yet in an odd sense, Paul knows physically he can't do that at this point. But tikis can, as I went to chick is to come and comfort you, strengthen you, come alongside of you, with a thought in mind, turn the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 10. And a verse that often comes up when we talk about the value of Christian Fellowship. And again, I think it's very evident as we're using this term fellowship, you could use Christian friendship, that we're not just speaking of being in the same place as everyone else. Because I think we all know you can be in the same place, even with other Christians and not feel connected. So Paul's talking about money. More than just I want you to get everybody together in the same location. But But this goes beyond just the location. It's an empathy. It's a Christ like love and concern, that that moves to action. So you look at Hebrews chapter 10. And the author of Hebrews which some upset is Paul, others say could be, Apollo's we really do not know. But one thing we are certain of that the believers are struggling and one of the reasons this letter

was written was to encourage them. So, you get the Hebrews 10 and verses 24 and 25. And the writer has this to say about the value of Christian fellowship and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching and you want Key and on a couple of words there. One is simply let us consider. This means reason to think about this. Look at what Scripture teaches about fellowship, and Christians coming together. The scripture seem to say this is a necessity, not not just a privilege. It's nice when it works out. But it's a necessity. And this is why I think it's worthy to study just this final greeting, because that is a key teaching. Paul wants us to understand as much as we talk about the armor of God and the importance of prayer, to stand firm in the faith calls for Christian Fellowship, strong Christian Fellowship. But then you notice he goes on, you know, let us consider let us stop and think reason about this. What will spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Words further, in some translations appropriately is rendered provoke, to prod, to stick to get moving. Now we're led into an aspect of Christian fellowship that we sometimes don't enjoy at the moment, but we desperately need. We need to be convicted at times through other Christians as we hear them speak of what God's doing in their life, as they share their enthusiasm and love for the Lord. Maybe you're sitting there and you're like, I don't what was the last time I felt like that? You know, where you're convicted you like what's what's missing here from for my walk with Christ is saying if we're going to continue to grow in Christ, we need that Christian Fellowship. We may not always want it. We may at times try to push it away. But it's what's necessary to spur us on Then you notice the next part and after that, let us not give up meeting together. Again, some translations put it a little differently, let us not neglect. It is easy to neglect, Christian Fellowship. We all are busy. We all time is a commodity that we all value. And yet, this is saying to us God's word that you need to watch and guard that tendency to let this part of your Christian life slip. And you can look at the letter of visions. I will didn't Paul have an excuse? I mean, he's in prison. But even Paul in prison is saying I need Christian Fellowship. I need tickets to come and be with me. I need other believers who can make the trip and spend time with me and I need them to know to go tell their churches. How Important Christian fellowship is the danger would be because this is at the end of Ephesians that we tend to speed through it. Like if we know Paul's gonna say goodbye to everyone and hope to see them soon, but he's saying more than that, sorry about the value of Christian Fellowship. But notice was saying that let's go back to Ephesians chapter six. And now we turn our attention to the character of Christian Fellowship. What does Christian Fellowship look like? And for many Christians today, the first thing they think of fellowship is coffee after the service donuts. I love donuts. That's great. And food is a thing that kind of pulls people together. But if that's your only definition of Christian Fellowship, you can get that by going to a local restaurant or diner. You can run into dunkin donuts. Get that. So clearly the Bible means more than that, or it speaks of

Christian Fellowship. We're talking about a partnership and identification together. That's all based in Jesus Christ. And because of that, Paul will talk a little bit here about what is the character of Christian Fellowship look like? Because there's no doubt when you're reading this final greeting, that Paul and countless believers profited from teacher kisses service. Like the fact that Paul would mention him and four of his letters, says this relationship that Paul has with educast is a tremendous blessing to him. And the fact that Tortugas has a church that he belongs to, and is a part of also indicates there are those that are benefiting from their fellowship with today. Yes and vice versa. So let's take a closer look at Ephesians six and again, verse 21. Because in verse 21, Paul gives us two descriptive terms for us. Isn't it interesting that in reference to this, we have no description physically what he looked like. Because that's not really the point. And perhaps tikis may have and I'm speculating here, may have just had nothing really physically about him that would have like, drawn YouTube or been like, Whoa, this guy is someone else. But it's his character. It's his walk with Christ that Paul zeroes in. And notice the first one teaches the dear brother The one who is much loved loved by Paul. Loved by those We're waiting for teaching us to return to them. In other words, just because teaching us was not present with them did not mean that fellowship was any less. In fact, again, you could argue it was increased. They couldn't wait to see and hear from togas. And as you've been learning in, in pbf, you know this term, dear or beloved brother is significant. And what we said about the ancient culture, Mediterranean world blood is everything. Blood Trumps any relationship that you're talking about in Christ Paul's not blood related to chickens. But spiritually, they're in a bond that is deeper than that. So he does not hesitate to refer to him. This is our dear brother familial language. And again, we often miss the message that was sent back then Witnesses second description and faithful servant of the Lord. This guy is is trustworthy. And Paul dependent on him the effectiveness of his ministry, the strength of Paul's own walk with the Lord was positively impacted by teacher kiss and many others as you look through some of Paul's final greetings that he has in his letters, but in point here would be teaching is a guy who is a reliable, trustworthy labor. He will carry out God's work. And Paul's not referring to him as well. He's just kind of a, you know, a go do it person I just tell him and he'll do it. But he's saying that this guy, he's true His Word. He lives out his Christian Fellowship, and its value because look at how he serves you. Look at how he has Serve me. Again Think for a moment teaching is not getting paid. provisioning ball is not part of a salary. Paul's not paying by the hour to be his personal assistant. What's motivated him to risk going to Paul to spending time with Paul. And we can assume away from his church away even maybe from his family, his Christian Fellowship, just love for Paul and ultimately, his love for the Lord. But I want you look at Colossians Colossians chapter four, which we read earlier, because Ephesians Philippians, excuse me, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon are all written about the same time. We know absolutely tikis is the one who's going to deliver these letters. But when you get to collections for Paul, add something Just how he describes triggers. And so you notice here

you have not just two terms, but three. So in Colossians 4:7 again the purpose tickets will tell you all the news about me. First one, he is a dear brother. He is one who is loved, deeply, much loved. So we heard that in Ephesians. But then he says he is a fellow minister. Now this seems to accentuate not just is he trustworthy? And not just is he another believer, but he is a faithful minister. And that's the roof from which we get the word Deacon which could imply he has a position of leadership in the church, perhaps a teacher. Clearly he is a devoted servant. God. And then Paul adds a term which he will often use himself. He's a fellow servant in the Lord, that he sees Christian Fellowship, Christian service like I do, he would call himself a slave of Christ, that his will is consumed in the will of another. What a way to describe a guy who we know nothing about how we look physically. We have no book that he wrote that as a part of Scripture, we have no indication that he ever wrote or published any books. But what a tribute to Christian fellowship in the heart of this man that Paul describes him in these terms. I mean, they're just start to get the feeling that the Paul is even important. With this man with his love for Christ, and it's not because he's anything special beyond other believers is just because this truth has grabbed hold of his soul. But since you're in Colossians, four, notice what verse nine also says. He is coming without an SMS, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you, they will tell you everything that is happening here. It's a few weeks ago, you heard his Tony preached on fi Lehman decimus this runaway slave who now is returning as a brother in Christ, he's part of this little journey. Can you imagine the conversations that must have taken place, drink tickets and an SMS? Just about a Christian Fellowship here he's, you know, going to be taking on decimus back to Philemon years. Your master who knows the Lord? What was going to change? Now? What does this mean for my relationship with him? strategic is is not just relaying what Paul said. He's living out what Paul's talking about the value of Christian Fellowship, and the character of Christian Fellowship. But I'm not going to go back to Ephesians six, because when you get to verses 23 and 24, you have a closing benediction, a prayer. And again, since every part of Scripture is there for our teaching and encouragement instruction, what does this prayer tell us? And I think it points to the improvement of Christian Fellowship. In other words, that our fellowship is based on our union and Christ. We don't develop that we didn't set the foundation for that. That is what happens. In Christ, but is it possible that our Christian fellowship is deepened and strengthened only when we act in obedience to God, that that is our responsibility to now in a sense, improve upon what Jesus Christ has established. And so you notice in this benediction you have first, a listing of spiritual realities that are ours in Christ. And so it says in verse 23, peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, with an undying love. I want to point you first to these realities. So notice the realities you have peace. And I think Paul's probably using peace here in its broadest way you have internal peace like you're right with God you have the peace of I think he's also using it externally. You have peace now in Christ with one another, through Christian Fellowship, that you're

not marked by division divisiveness, backbiting, as the church that you genuinely have a love and a concern for one another, that is acted upon not mere words, not mere lip service, but it's modeled, it's lived out. But then he says you have love. Certainly they love God, teach you guys loves God. But because tickets loves God does not explain why he loves Paul. Why he loves an SMS. Why he loves the people in his church that he's going to be returning to and serving God their way these are these are spiritual realities that are ours in Christ. But I would argue what Paul saying is part of the Christian Life is now perfecting those and improving upon those, building upon those through obedience. Notice the third one is love with faith from God the Father. In other words, we have an assurance and a confidence in what the Scriptures teach. So teach you guys left, not just saying, Here's Paul's letter, but saying, This is God's word through Paul to us. And the fact that it was to be circulated and past other churches would say, this is God's word. Paul isn't just writing to you and to me, he's writing to all those in the body of Christ. And then finally, the fourth he mentions Grace, Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. This aspect that what we have received by faith is to be displayed Through Christian Fellowship. In other words, we have received the grace of God, forgiveness of sin. Doesn't that now explain why we forgive others within the body of Christ is because of what we have received. It's a reciprocal this this would be natural. We have been forgiven, we've received grace. So our Christian fellowship is marked by accountability is marked by love and is marked by grace, but also admonition. Because the reason Paul is saying this is he knows, there is always the concern that one might start to neglect to fall back on not improve it. What is already been secured for us in Christ. He gets to the last part of verse 24. And there's a little bit of confusion as to what Paul's referring to. So you notice the nrv it's speaks of to love our Lord Jesus Christ, with an undying love. ESV puts it to love the Lord Jesus Christ with love, incorruptible. And there's a difference here because the way that an IV reads it seems to emphasize more, our love for God that our love should be an undying love. Where I think it would be better to translate this incorruptible love, not referring to our love for Christ. But this phrase qualifies the last phrase and that sentence Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ is in corruptible. And when that explain why Christian Fellowship should be valued, why a character should be such Why should be improved upon, because Jesus Christ is an incorruptible. That the source of that fellowship comes from the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, who were all incorruptible. And you see the balance here. If you just look at Ephesians four, verse three, we're in Ephesians, four, three, Paul says, make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit, through the bond of peace is picking up on this thought Christ has secured this relationship. But it is incumbent upon every believer to build a partner to improve upon that. Because I want you to think for a moment now we're all finished with the letter of Ephesians in one sense, but I hope we're not done thinking about what this letter has to say to us. In other words, as you focus on these final Greetings, do you believe what Paul said? What ticket said? what Jesus said about Christian fellowship? Like do you really believe that? I think many

of us would say yes, we do believe that. I don't know if you do. I think we can believe the words. But if you look at this the way that I know Paul believe this the way that I know teaching is believe this. He modeled this. He lived this out. He imitated it. But there's no question they weren't just saying they believe in Christian Fellowship, they lived Christian Fellowship. Heavenly Father, we are so thankful that your word is always true. And I ask that these words in this entire letter would both encourage us, but also Lord convicts, some of us. There are times that we are in Improving what you have secured for us that we are neglecting the development and the riches that come with being one in Christ, and one with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray this to the glory of God. Amen.