



Unity in the Body of Christ

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Colossians 3:23 NIV

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

The God of Unification

The bible tells us in **John 17:21 KJV:**

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 believe you sent me.

The night before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus prayed for the unity of His people. The church!

As believers we are not called to create unity, but to maintain it (keep it) or at the very least not to disrupt it.

When unity is disrupted, the focus is taken off of, worshipping God to serving individual ideologies and the plan of the enemy.

The Unity in the father

Before creation, in eternity past, God exists in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We refer to God in three persons as the *Trinity*.

The Trinity shares a common image and likeness. They belong to One another. God the Father, Son, and Spirit communicate with One Another in a loving relationship.

They are in complete agreement and work together for the same purpose. The Trinity is in perfect unity.

The unified Trinity work together in harmony to create a universe. We see the beauty of the Creator in His creation.

We taste and see that the Creator God is good. As we observe the universe, we conclude that unity is an essential design element.

All life comes about and is sustained by every part of the universe working in a unity relationship.

Every person born is the fruit of a union of a man and a woman becoming one flesh.

In the beginning, everything in the universe works in one accord. Water and land, plants and animals, stars, and planets, and light and darkness worked in unity.

The universe was a display of perfection.

But, today, we witness that the universe is not perfect. Unity is gone.

Wars, fighting, conflict, discord, strife, arguing, and trouble is found on every street and in every house. Something happened.

Even when we look in the church of today, the unity of the body is under attack with egos' lack of commitment, and a lack of the anointing amongst the believers.

What happened to God's perfect design?

7 Enemies of Unity in the Church

1. Sin, Gossip, slander, adultery (in the heart or in actions), lying, stealing, and any sin which is practiced and not repented of, will rip apart a Christian community.
2. Lack of forgiveness. Holding a grudge and not letting go of past hurts prevents us reaching out and loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.
3. Prioritizing secondary issues. Trumpeting your hobby, interest, secondary theological issue, political viewpoint, financial opinion, or

other value outside of the gospel, will lead to smug, divisive attitudes and prideful, separated hearts.

4. Racism. Thinking negatively about those with a different skin type or culture will breed hostility and evil dissensions.

5. Ageism. Believing that young people are naive, old people are out of touch, or middle-aged people are too concerned with their families, will sprout the seeds of schism and division.

6. Social/economic snobbery. Judging and putting down others who are poor or rich, stylish or behind the times will kill unity in the church.

7. Intellectual/anti-intellectual elitism. Looking down on those who are poorly educated or on those who are smarter than you will distance individuals from sharing their thoughts with each other and creatively working together.

What is God's Plan for Unity

Unity in the Body of Christ through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, means that we share the same faith and hope and reach out in one witness to all.

In a divisive world, it's important to remember that division is the enemy's plan, not God's. It's an attitude of heart and a mind poised against Christ.

Throughout scripture, God reveals His design for relationships and relational connection.

It is in relationship, and the way we engage with one another, that we can experience more of who God is and all God has for us.

We are created after the image of a God whose nature is relational. Designed to need Him and others.

Divisive opinions reveal the stubbornness and pride of our own hearts, more than the wrongness of someone else's.

Our staunch stances also reveal our fears of getting it wrong, being wrong, and somehow not being accepted as right enough.

Rather, God draws us near to His heart and into unity, centered on who He is and His design for us.

What Destroys Unity in the Body of Christ

Now, more than ever, unity in the Body of Christ is of paramount importance. We need to be His hands and feet in a hurting, confused world.

However, the enemy has fabricated plans to thwart [God's Kingdom](#) working in the earth.

One of the ways that he does this is by hindering unity in the Body of Christ and dividing it against itself.

And when the Church body is not in unity, we are powerless to operate in the earth as God intended.

Sin in the Church is a common source of disunity in the church.

These issues can be from gossip, pride and fear or even sin issues with compromising the word of God to cater to the world.

Let's be honest. When looking at things that can cause division in the church, they all come down to sin issues.

Sin issues are a result of lacking depth in your faith and relationship with Christ.

Lack of Prayer

Do you pray for your Church? Do you pray in the good times and the bad?

And most of all, do you give praise to God because he answers those prayers? Or do you give Him praise when he doesn't answer your prayers?

Lack of Relationship with God

In connection with prayer, are you investing with your relationship with God?

As leaders in the church, we have a habit of placing problems on our own shoulders, taking on projects and tasks last minute because of our own pride and self-worth.

A truly unified and effective church would continue growing and become stronger if the leadership were to all die in an instance.

This is because we are unified in Christ, not in the leaders or pastors.

I remember hearing a lesson where a church who loved their pastor but wasn't growing spiritually.

Their pastor would go up the hill and speak with God, then he would come back down and tell them what God had said.

They loved and thanked the pastor for such a great message.

What the church family failed to realize is that they could go up the hill to the source, to God.

As church leaders, we need to stop pointing at ourselves and point towards God.

Your Church is More of a Club or Business

If your church lacks focus on Biblical truth, you have become a club or business.

It is interesting how a church that compromises the word of God for the world suddenly sees a drop in loyalty and growth.

This is because by aligning yourself with the world you have made your organization insignificant. If this is your church, you must pursue God first, not the world.

A Healthy Church

A healthy church is a body (**1 Corinthians 12:12-14 KJV**).

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by ^{the} one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

And a healthy body function from the largest organ to the smallest fingernail.

In order for the body to function each cell must work in unity. Think of each person as a cell.

And their relationship with Christ must be healthy for the whole body to be healthy.

It is critical we recognize we are not expected to have the same opinions. We are not given the same set of gifts and desires.

No two people have the same set of strengths and weaknesses, or the same way of expressing them.

Also, because of individual temperaments, even people who experience the same events will have different reactions.

We are still called to unity in the body of Christ. Scripture demands it!

1 Corinthians 1:10 KJV

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

1 Peter 3:8 KJV

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Philippians 2:2 KJV

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.

The church is the body of Christ, because we are united with the body of Christ.

And Jesus longed for and prayed for us to be united with each other in the same kind of unity He shares with the Father.

The verses below are part of a prayer Jesus prayed to the Father,

referencing all who will believe in Him across the whole course of history, including you!

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:20-23, ESV).

Our unity with each other stems from the fact that we all have the same relationship to God.

Every other Christian is our brother or sister in Christ, chosen and adopted by Him into His family.

And we all are indwelled by Him.

In fact, we are not just individually the dwelling place of God, but the church itself is the dwelling place of God.

Ephesians 2:18-22.... describes us as a building God is establishing, with Jesus as its cornerstone, "in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (vv. 21-22).

As eternal family, we're not only inextricably joined with Him, but with each other too.

And to be fair, “joined” is probably too small a word to capture the dynamics and dimensions of this relationship—we are fused, grafted into it.

God’s love for us not only reveals how we should love, but it also compels us to love. Just as God is outgoing in His love, we should be too!

We are deeply involved with Him and with each other on every level of kingdom life, though it’s often challenging to remember this and live it out.

The picture Scripture paints is one where Christ-followers of various tribal, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds live together with Christ as their focus.

Among Jesus’ disciples, He had the wealthy tax collectors and the poor fisherman.

He had those who worked for Rome and those who wanted to overthrow Rome; He welcomed those who were considered filthy and godless—pagans, prostitutes, and lepers.

What a beautiful demonstration not only of His love and unity, but of His diversity!

Not only did Jesus live in this way, but His followers did too.

The early church, which was made up primarily of circumcised Jews, began to see an influx of Gentile followers after the coming of the Holy Spirit, but they didn’t demand circumcision of them (Acts 15:1-21).

Their primary concern was that their shared belief in Jesus not be disrupted by division. But this definitely wasn’t a seamless process.

Change can be difficult for any of us, especially where religious beliefs are concerned, and it often results in conflict as people adjust.

That's what happened with the early church.

They had to get through some bumpy times to throw open the doors of the gospel. Even the leaders struggled at times.

In fact, Paul had to call out Peter when he caved to peer pressure and disregarded the Gentile believers, choosing to eat only with the Jewish believers. Paul rebuked him for showing partiality, which is divisive (Gal. 2:11-14).

Jesus spent more time identifying Himself with His church than with any one individual.

For instance, prior to his conversion to Christianity, the apostle Paul was an outspoken persecutor of Christians.

When the voice of the resurrected, ascended Christ spoke from heaven and confronted Paul about His actions, He asked, "why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4).

Jesus was already back in heaven, but He was identifying Himself with the persecution of the church.

Additionally, Scripture calls Jesus" the head of the body" (Col. 1:18), and the head certainly knows and experiences all that the body endures.

As the people who are made in [God's] image, conformed to His image, and called to imitate Him, we should expect that others will be drawn to Him through our lives and witness!

The very love that rescued us is pursuing others who don't yet know Him, and He's using us as His ambassadors in that process. When others see our relationship with God, our hope is that they'll want to have that relationship too!"

The New Testament repeatedly affirms the connection between the unity of the church and the triune life of God.

Just as God's unity and diversity is revealed in His triune nature, we participate in the triune life through the Son, being united in Him in our diversity.

Donald Macleod said, we must be careful not to set this unity and this diversity over against each other.

The church is not one despite its diversity but because of its diversity."

This is harmony not homogeny. Every person playing the same instrument with the same note does not make a symphony.

But different instruments hitting different notes to the same rhythm and key of the same song?

That's beautiful! The Economic Trinity has demonstrated this for us, working out a unified will and purpose through distinct roles to accomplish it.

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The very love that rescued us is pursuing others who don't yet know Him, and He's using us as His ambassadors in that process.

When others see our relationship with God, our hope is that they'll want to have that relationship too!

Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples. The word disciple means "learner."

2 He wanted the learners to learn, then teach. He told them to baptize the new disciples, but He didn't just say to baptize them in His own name—

He said to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into Christ—buried and raised with Him—and this is how we participate in the communion of the Trinity.

Our verbal confession and action of being baptized are important, but we need to understand that baptism is fundamentally about who we are.

It's about our union with the triune God.

Since many professing believers know very little about the three Persons of the Trinity, we have failed terribly at obeying Jesus' command in our lives and in our churches.

It's vital that the doctrine of the Trinity is not glossed over but be widely taught and understood among professing Christians.

Our new, richer understanding of who God is will begin to inform everything about the way we make peace with our past, live in the present, look to the future, and interact with others around us.

Knowing Him better changes the way we know ourselves. Knowing Him better changes the way we love others.

Now that we see Him more clearly, we can confidently say: He's where the joy is!

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

1. When we realize we are members of "one body" in Christ we can treat one another with the same love Christ has for his body.
2. When we worship the Triune God, we give honor and glory to one Lord, one Spirit, and one God and Father of all true believers. The doctrine of the Trinity is woven throughout this letter of the apostle Paul.
3. When we understand the biblical teaching on the baptism by the Holy Spirit, we want him to have full control over our lives so we can preserve the unity of his church.

Homework Discussion

Before Jesus left this earth to ascend into heaven to sit at the right hand of his heavenly Father, he promised to send his Holy Spirit to empower his disciples to be his witnesses.

On the day of Pentecost, this promise was fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit filled the disciple Peter with such bold speech that about 3000 believed and were added to the church. The believers then formed a community.

Read Acts 2:42-47 aloud.

1. List the behaviors that the members of the early church showed. Which words and activities emphasize the unity experienced in those days?
2. Many biblical commentators agree that the phrase “breaking of bread” in vs. 42 refers to Communion. How does participating in Communion complement all the other activities that Luke mentions in this passage? Is there a direct connection?
3. How does the church in Acts 2 compare with the way you defined church in the previous section?
4. What positive behaviors were evident in the church of your childhood or the church you now attend?

The importance of unity in the early church community is shown in the extreme discipline exercised in the case of Ananias and Sapphira and the revision of the ‘church order’ when the Grecian widows were overlooked.

5. Read Acts 5:1-11. One of the central characteristics of the early church in Acts was caring for the poor and needy.

Recognizing this, Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all that they had earned to the church, thereby turning what was intended to be a selfless pointer to the deep love in the church into a selfish attempt to receive admiration.

What does the severity of the discipline they received tell us about the character of the early church?

6. Read Acts 6:1-7. The ‘church order’ was revised when the Grecian widows were overlooked. What does this indicate about the unity of the early church?
7. Recall a time when your church restructured its way of being church together to include everyone more fully in the blessings of life in Christ. What was done? What effect did this change have?