

The Importance of Unity

October 7, 2012

I. Review: Eph 4:1-6

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

A. Unity is a byproduct of five character qualities.

1. Humility

Humility is the opposite of pride and leads to obedience and dependency on Christ.

2. Gentleness / Meekness

Gentleness / Meekness is the opposite of self-assertion, rudeness, and harshness. Jesus demonstrates this quality when he laid aside His garments and washes the disciple's feet at the Last Supper. It suggests having one's emotions under control. It is strength that knows who it is.

3. Patience

Patience literally is "a long temper." It is the spirit which never gives in or up for it endures to the end even in times of adversity.

4. Forbearance

Forbearance is close to our expression "putting up with." It describes being patient with the shortcomings of others.

5. Diligence

Diligence is literally "making every effort."

B. The Holy Spirit is emphasizing unity by using the word "one." (Eph 4:4-6)

There is one:

1) Body 2) Spirit 3) Hope of your calling 4) Lord 5) Faith 6) Baptism 7) God and Father

C. Further notes on the emphasis of unity in Ephesians 4:1-3

The apostle Paul exhorted the church to keep the unity of the Spirit. The fact is we have been given all that we need to be in perfect unity in our church.

1. "I urge you to"

This is a very strong word in the Greek. Originally the verb means make haste, and evolved to mean "diligence" and here it means to give diligence.

2. "Live worthy of your calling"

This means to live and act in a worthy way, a way that honors our heavenly Father. Disunity is not honoring to God

3. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit."

We have a unity that the Spirit has given us and now it is our responsibility to keep it.

4. "In the bond of peace."

Unity results in peaceful relationships in the church. Peace is the glue that will hold the church together to difficulties that it must face. It makes the ship seaworthy, holds it together in times of storm.

II. The Importance of Unity

I believe that the principal of unity is very important to receive the blessings of God in our live as individuals, families and churches. Many people are unaware of this principle and therefore allow the enemy to rip them off in receiving the blessings of God. Consequently we battle thoughts of disunity, dishonor, strife and negative thinking.

A. This principle in general.

God commands blessings wherever there is unity.

Ps 133:1-3 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! ... For there the Lord commanded the blessing-- life forever.

God command's blessings where he sees people dwelling together in unity. This is a powerful principle, one that we need to embrace.

The power of agreement

Matt 18:19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

The power of agreement releases the power of God to do miracles on the earth. Sometimes we believe that this means that we agree on the prayer that we are praying. However, I believe it speaks of the relationship of two people being in agreement in general. It is very difficult to be in agreement in a specific area where you have general disagreement and disunity between individuals.

The power of disagreement

Mark 3:24-26 "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!

Jesus is very clear in this Scripture. The power of disagreement is so great that even the kingdom of darkness has to be in agreement to accomplish anything. The devil strategy is to get people to be divided so that the kingdom of God cannot stand and that the kingdom of darkness prevails.

B. Unity in the home

1. Marriage

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

The enemy is constantly trying to get husbands and wives to live in disagreement. If he can do this than their prayers will be totally ineffective. Here we see the principle of honor and unity going together. Probably the greatest force on earth is where and a couple will live in unity and honor defeat the powers of darkness through prayer.

2. Children

Eph 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

Again we can see that unity and honor go hand-in-hand. The enemy is always at work to get children to disrespect and dishonor their parents so that he can make their lives miserable and short. (Ex 21:17; Lev 19:3; Pro 1:8-9; 30:17; Mat 15:4-6; Col 3:20)

C. In the Church

1. Our leaders

1 Thes 5:12-13 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

How easy it is for us to be critical and negative of Church leadership. It is very difficult to receive blessing when you feel and speak negative against those who lead you.

1 Tim 5:17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

We are ask they supposed to give double honor to those who are spiritual leaders.

2. Church relationships

I find it very interesting that Paul deals with disunity in the Corinthian Church before he deals with any of the other problems that were there in that Church. This was a Church that had many problems and was marked by carnality with those gifted in spiritual gifts. Divisions made people take sides and they identified themselves with various leaders. Consequently, when they partook of the Communion table, they were eating judgment to themselves because they were not in right relationship with each other. The Communion table was to bring blessings in people's lives, but if the enemy came get us to live in disunity, the Communion table becomes a place of judgment.

Jn 17:20-23 Jesus prayed for unity

"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me."

1 Cor 1:10-17 Unity leads to having no cliques in a church.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

I believe that the reason there are so many different denominations is not because it is a work of the Holy Spirit but rather a work of the devil. I also believe that we are living in a day where the Holy Spirit is bringing unity back to the body of Christ. Denominational walls are falling down as we respond to the Holy Spirit and walk in the blessing of unity.

1 Cor 11:27-31 we are not to participate in communion with broken relationships in the church.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

3. We maintain our witness as we live in unity.

Mark 9:50 Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

John 13:34–35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

4. Unity leads to people getting saved.

Acts 2:46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

D. Civil Authorities

1 Peter 2:17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Rom 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

We live in the world that loves to criticize and complain against those who lead this nation. What would happen if we actually believed the Scriptures and spoke positively about our leaders and gave honor and refused to walk in disunity? God will command blessing wherever He finds unity.

III. Unity in Ephesians

Eph 2:14 the cross of Jesus is our source for unity

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

Eph 2:22 unity is a work of the Holy Spirit

in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Eph 4:3 we can only preserve unity

being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:11-13 God loves unity in diversity of gifts

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

IV. The power of unity

Here are some additional Scriptures to consider. One of the greatest challenges in the New Testament is for believers to live together in unity and honor.

Unity leads to serving the Lord together.

1 Samuel 14:7 example of Jonathan and his armor bearer

His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire."

1 Samuel 18:1–4 example of David and Jonathan

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

Unity brings an ability to walk together in agreement.

Amos 3:3 Shall two walk together, except they have agreed? (ASV)

We will serve with others shoulder to shoulder as we live in unity.

Zephaniah 3:9 For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

Unity leads to commitment to each other

Acts 1:14 praying together

These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Unity leads to giving honor to one another

Rom 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Unity leads to experiencing peace, love and comfort with others

2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Unity comes from intentionality

Eph 4:3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Unity is to be a goal

1 Pet 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;

Unity brings glory to God

Phil 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Unity results in harmonious living with others

Phil 4:2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

Unity leads to hearts being knit together in love

Col 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Unity leads to forgiving others

Col 3:13 Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Love is the bond of unity

Col 3:14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Unity leads to living in peace with one another

1 Thes 5:13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

V. Warnings against strife and division:

Jas 3:14-16 pride, jealousy and self-ambition

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Jas 4:1-3 quarrels and conflicts arise from unfulfilled strong desires.

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Gal 5:13-15 failure to love and serve others results in conflicts.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.

Gal 5:25-26 failure to walk in the Spirit leads to unhealthy competition.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Php 2:14-15 grumbling and complaining makes us lose our witness.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

1 Co 3:3-4 jealousy and strife leads to wrong identities.

for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?

2 Co 12:20 unmet expectations leads to sin and broken relationships

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances;

Numbers 11:4-10 unmet expectations leads to complaining against leadership given by God.

The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna." Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar, and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil. When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall with it. Now Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, each man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased.

1 Samuel 12:14 disunity comes from rebellion and not fearing the Lord.

"If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God.