

# The Fundamentals of Unity in the Church

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**PROPOSITION:** In this lesson we will look at Ephesians 4:1-4 as this passage teaches the following: 1) The Prerequisites of unity. 2) The Principles of Unity 3) The Plan of Unity 4) The Purpose of Unity.

**OBJECTIVES:** Each hearer should be able to state what the basics of unity are from these verses.

**AIM:** To help each individual understand the importance of maintaining unity in the church.

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Read: Ephesians 4:1-6

- 1) The book of Ephesians is about the church.
- 2) Paul is writing this book to encourage and exhort those at Ephesus to value the church.
- 3) In chapter 4 he turns attention to unity in the church.
- 4) In verses 1-6 he gives us the basic outline and pattern for maintaining unity in the church.

**DISCUSSION:** The pattern for maintaining unity in the church involves . . .

## **I. THE PREREQUISITES TO UNITY (EPHESIANS 4:1-3) — HAVING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE.**

1. Being content toward self — “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you were called.”

1) Philippians 4:11-13 “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

2) 1 Peter 1:13-16 “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

3) When one is not content toward self, disharmony among others will come quickly.

2. Being content toward our fellow man—“with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.”

1) Romans 12:9-18 “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for

evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

2) One who was NOT content: 3 John 1:10 “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.”

3) When we are not content toward our fellow man, division will soon occur.

3. Being content toward God—“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

1) Living within the authority of Christ; Colossians 3:17

2) 2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

3) Those who are not content with God’s word will cause problems and bring division.

## **II. THE PRINCIPLES OF UNITY (EPHESIANS 4:4-6) — HAVING THE RIGHT DOCTRINE.**

1. One body — the church.

1) Ephesians 1:22-23 “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

2) Colossians 1:18 “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

3) Any other body causes division.

2. One Spirit — the Holy Spirit

1) John 15:26 “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”

3) Any other spirit/creed brings division.

3. One Hope — Heaven

1) John 14:2-3 “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

2) 2 Corinthians 5:1 “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

3) Any other hope causes division.

4. One Lord — Jesus the Christ

1) Peter’s confession. Matthew 16:16 “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.”

2) Hebrews 1:1-3 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed

heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

3) Any other Lord or confession brings division.

5. One Faith — The system of belief that God left for us to live by.

1) Jude 3 “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

2) 2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

3) Any other faith brings disunity.

6. One Baptism — The defining act of salvation.

1) Acts 2:38 “Repent and be baptized . . . .”

2) Colossians 2:12 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

3) Preaching any other baptism results in dissension.

7. One Father — The physical and spiritual creator of us all and our Father.

1) Gal.4:6 “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

2) 1 John 3:1 “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

3) Holding to any other father creates division.

8. Paul was not trying to make a definitive list of doctrines here. His point is merely to show that just as foundational truth is revealed in unity, so ought also the church to behave.

### **III. THE PLAN OF UNITY (EPHESIANS 4:7-12) — HAVING THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION.**

1. That Christ should rule from heaven.

1) Hebrews 8:1 “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

2) 1 Peter 3:22 “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

2. That “gifts” would be given to men. This was done through the Holy Spirit.

1) John 14:16-17 “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

2) We see the Spirit shed forth the first gifts in Acts 2. “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

3. That men would use these gifts according to God’s grace.

1) 1 Corinthians 12:24-30 “but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?”

2) Romans 12:4-8 “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

3) God provided structure for the early church.

4) He provides structure for us today through the office of elder, deacon, evangelist, and teachers.

5) It is our responsibility to work within this structure in a peaceful and united way.

#### **IV. THE PURPOSE OF UNITY (EPHESIANS 4:13-16) — HAVING THE RIGHT WORKING SPIRIT, EDIFICATION IN LOVE**

1. Where there is unity, there is soundness and growth and edification.

1) 1 Corinthians 1:10 “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

2) Philippians 2:1, 2 “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

3) John 14:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

4) A united body will be healthful and grow.

2. Where there is division, there is fragmentation and decay.

1) 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

2) Romans 16:17-18 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”

3) A sick and diseased body will suffer and die.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. We have discussed four foundational truths for unity in the church.

1) The Prerequisites for Unity — Having the right attitude toward unity.

2) The Principles of Unity — Having the right doctrine.

3) The Plan of Unity — Having the right organization.

4) The Purpose of Unity — Having the right working spirit, edification in Love

2. Invitation

1) If you are a Christian but have fallen away

a. You have contributed to the disunity of the body.

b. Would you restore your place among the saved and begin working toward the bodies healthful existence once again?

2) If you are not a Christian this morning . . .

a. You need to be a part of that body and be united with us today.

b. The great restoration plea is for unity—to take the Bible as our only creed and to do only what it authorizes us to do in our lives.

c. If we are honest and willing to submit to God’s word, then we can have this kind of unity.

d. Heed the plan that it has for man’s salvation today!

a) Hear the word; Romans 10:17 “Faith comes by hearing . . .”

b) Believe with all your heart; Hebrews 11:6 “For without faith it is impossible . . . .”

c) Repent of your sins (Acts 17:30).

d) Confess Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 16:16).

e) Be baptized for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:15-16).