

Christian Unity

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Introduction: Many churches make the claim that they are united, but are they?

- A. The mere claim to be united doesn't make it true.
 - 1. Many churches have used the word unity, united, or union in their name to emphasize their "unity."
 - 2. We don't use these words in the name of the Lord's church, does that make us any less united?
- B. On what basis is a church truly united?
 - 1. There is more to unity than the absence of arguing or fighting.
 - 2. There is more to unity than being kind and "loving" toward each other.
- C. The unity that Jesus prayed for is unity based on the truth (**John 17:17-23**).
 - 1. Truth is the foundation to true unity among disciples of Christ.
 - 2. A commitment to believe in the truth and practice it (**1 Tim. 3:15**).
- D. Unity is a wonderful blessing, so let us do all we can to obtain it (**Ps. 133:1**).

I. Unity Driven Churches

- A. In a *worthy* manner, Christians are to be *diligent* to preserve church unity.
 - 1. Unity is maintained by Christians who conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the calling of God (**Eph. 4:1-3**).
 - 2. We must "endeavor" to know the truth and work to be united in the truth, for unity is neither acquired nor maintained by accident.
- B. Christians are to strive for complete "oneness" (**Eph. 4:4-6**).
 - 1. The foundation we share and must protect is that there is only *one* body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and one God and Father.
 - 2. "One faith" (cf. **Jude 3**) demands unity of belief: There is but *one* faith, *one* truth, or *one* gospel in which Christians are to adhere to.
- C. Unity is a goal that we must *continually* strive for and improve in overtime.
 - 1. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are to assist Christians in learning the truth (**Eph 4:11-13**); in fact all members are to do their part (**vs. 14-16**).
 - 2. We are at different levels of knowledge and maturity (**Heb. 5:12-14**).
 - 3. Our learning process or spiritual growth in knowledge of God's will will continue as long as we continue to serve the Lord (**2 Pet. 3:18**).
 - 4. This does not mean we are in a perpetual state of study and never take a stand on any issue however; we must speak the truth boldly (**Phil. 1:14**).
- D. Christian fellowship is based upon our unity (**Phil. 2:1-2**).
 - 1. "One mind" – "to be agreed together, to cherish the same views, to be harmonious" (Thayer) (cf. **Amos 3:3**): "*Intent on one purpose*" (NASB).
 - 2. We press on toward the goal of Heaven together when we walk united by the same rule or standard (i.e., God's word, **Phil. 3:14-16**).

II. How United Do We Have to Be?

- A. Unity in collective action is of great importance (**1 Cor. 1:10**).
 - 1. If we do not agree on how we are to worship as a church, it will be extremely difficult to worship together "*in spirit and in truth*." (**Jn. 4:24**).
 - 2. If we do not have agreement on what the work of the church is, we will not fulfill God's work (**Phil. 4:15; Eph. 4:15; Acts 11:27-30**).

- B. Unity in individual action is also very important!
 - 1. If we belittle the importance of being united on individual matters, where will it end? (e.g., divorce, gambling, alcohol, etc.).
 - 2. If we declare individual differences as being inconsequential, God's standard of fellowship will be compromised (**2 John 9-11**).

III. How is it Possible to Be United?

- A. Agreement on the standard for unity: *The Bible* (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).
 - 1. Consider the challenge of bringing people together who do not meet with their Bibles alone! (Creeds, traditions, philosophies, books of men).
 - 2. Our utmost concern is to have authority from Christ's word (**Col. 3:17**).
- B. A *diligent* commitment to Bible study (**2 Tim. 2:15**).
 - 1. Unity is based on truth (**John 17:17-23**); therefore we must "*come to the knowledge of the truth*" in order to be united (**1 Tim. 2:4**).
 - 2. God expects His children to know His word and not be dependent on others to tell them what to believe (**Ac 17:11**/ commentaries, magazines).
- C. Bible study with the *right* attitude of heart.
 - 1. There are bad attitudes that are destructive to unity (e.g., **Col. 3:8-9**).
 - 2. Christians must deliberately "*put on*" the heart of God (**Col. 3:12-13**).
 - 3. We cannot be haughty in mind or act like a "know-it-all." (**Rom 12:16**).
 - 4. Humbly listen to what others have to say from God's word and be willing to change if necessary (**Prov 18:12-13; cf. Acts 18:24-26**).
 - 5. Even the most knowledgeable students of the Bible cannot be united when they don't have love for one another (**Col. 3:14**).
 - 6. "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*" (**Col. 3:15**); we are called in *one* body; not only reconciled to God, but reconciled to one another.
- D. Belief that there is ultimately *only one truth* that can unite us and save us.
 - 1. People today will reject biblical truths and automatically dismiss it by saying: "That's just *your* interpretation."
 - 2. There are *real* differences between interpretations (**Mat. 7:13-14**).
 - 3. Finding the one path of truth requires recognition that there is *only one* right interpretation of the Scriptures. *Which one provides the evidence?*
 - 4. There is *only one* faith (**Eph. 4:5; Jude 3**), one truth (**John 8:32**), and one gospel (**Gal. 1:6-9**) that God has revealed to us.
 - 5. The truth the Bible reveals *can* be understood (**Eph. 3:4 / 2 Pet. 3:16**).

IV. What Sacrifices are you willing to make for Unity?

- A. Truth must never be sacrificed or compromised (**2 Cor 13:8; Prov. 23:23**).
- B. Truth is invaluable, therefore let us search diligently together to find it.
 - 1. Whatever the cost, save violating God's will, we should be willing to pay it in order to find the truth and stand together as one (**Prov. 2:4-5; Mat. 13:45-46**).
- C. Unity in the church requires sacrificial love from each member (**Jn. 15:12-13**).
 - 1. Genuine love for one another will be demonstrated by our commitment to help other get to Heaven (**James 5:19-20**).

Conclusion: May Our Prayer for the Church Always Be: True Unity the Way God Intended "According to Christ Jesus" (Romans 15:5-6).