

Christian Unity

- I. Unity of believers.
 - A. Importance.
 1. The subject of Jesus' most important prayer – John 17.
 2. Necessary for evangelism – v. 23.
 3. A constant theme in the epistles.
 4. A vital concern for the early church.
 - a. Worship in only one place in each city on the Lord's Day.
 - B. The reality – Eph. 4:1-6.
 1. God has answered Jesus' prayer – Heb. 5:7.
 2. There is one body – v. 4:4.
 3. Christian unity is based on the unity of God – vv. 4-6; John 17:20-23
 4. The Nicene Creed: "I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church".
 5. All exhortations are to live as united, not to create unity – vv. 1-3.
 6. This is the basis of other commands to love each other, etc.
 - C. Living as united – Phil. 2:1-4.
 1. Common doctrine – v. 2.
 2. Common affection – v. 2.
 3. Common goals – vv. 3-4; 1:27.
 4. Common worship – 1 Cor. 11:2, 16, 23-34.
 5. No verse in scripture specifically demands organizational unity in the church, but to despise this is counter to the nature of God and man.
 6. None of these can be accomplished merely by being nice to each other.
 7. None of these can be accomplished merely by doing things together.
 8. Teaching, discussion, correction are also necessary.
 9. This requires honest recognition of differences.
 - D. Counterfeit unity.
 1. Without common doctrine, affection, goals, and worship, we are not living in unity.
 2. Attempts to create unity without *all* of these are misplaced or idolatrous.
 3. Shortcuts to unity fail to produce unity, weaken the church, and reduce our outreach.
 4. *By themselves*, joint activities, shared worship, etc. may create a feeling of unity but do little to produce true unity in the Spirit.
 5. When should you break unity? When do things get so bad with other believers that you should separate from them?
 - a. Never. It cannot be done.
 - b. Jesus has created unity among His people. You cannot break it. You must not try.
 - c. But neither should you pretend to live in unity with those who are not in Christ: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians, etc.
 - d. Judge! Be careful how you judge!
 - E. Practical instructions – Eph. 4:25-32.
 1. Resolve anger against others – vv. 26-27, 31.
 2. Speak to build up others – v. 29.
 3. Be kind and forgiving – v. 32.
 4. The whole focus is on you; your role is to do the right thing regardless of what others do.

F. Love one another – 1 Cor. 13:1-8a.

1. Love is more important than Bible studies, evangelism, worship, etc. – vv. 1-3.
2. Love is patient, endures problems for a long time – v. 4,5,7.
3. Love does not envy others – v. 4.
4. Love is not proud – v. 4-5.

G. Problems loving each other.

1. Personality.
2. Talents and skills.
3. Gifts.
4. Circumstances and experiences.

H. Conclusions.

1. Live as though you are inseparably bound to each other.
2. Practice patience, understanding, humility.
3. Face differences and problems; do not try to avoid or ignore them.
4. Appreciate and accommodate differences among others.
5. Resolve anger quickly.