

Bridgeway Community Church  
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## **Series: God's Got Your Number!**

### **#1 - UNITY**

"We need unity. If ever in our world today we need to come together and be united, it's today, especially in our church...I want to concentrate talking about unity in the body of Christ."

Question: Is it possible to be united yet be diverse?

Ephesians 4:3-6 NIV84

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Question: How do we as believers reach God's goal for the church?

"His ultimate goal is that we be united in the body of Christ. Yes, it is possible for born-again believers to be united in a world of division."

"Today, I want to show that God has never asked us in this unity to be identical."

As human beings, we all want to be connected to somebody. 1 can be a lonely number.

"When it comes to the body of Christ and God's kingdom people, 1 is an ultimate number. It is a number we all need to strive for in the body of Christ."

Question: What is unity?

First, we need to know what unity is NOT. We are NOT clones!

"To be united to one another, we do not need to look like you, act like you, talk like you, or smell like you! I can still be me."

Unity is like a freight train - they were all connected to one another even though each of them contained something different. Yet they were driven by one engineer, one conductor and all headed in the same direction. One conductor, one train, many cars.

Ephesians 4:5 NIV84  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism

Question: What is the difference between unity and conformity?

Ephesians 4:3 NIV84  
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

"God never asks us to create unity in his body. The church has never been asked to create unity. We've only been asked to maintain unity."

One of the unique things about the church is that it is already united!

Conformity is behavior according to social acceptance, convention, and standards.

Unity is a state of being united or joined together as a whole.

"We need to learn how to get along and work together in unity. The way we get unity is that we all learn, it's a process."

"Our purpose is a common divine purpose and goal to keep unity yet remain diverse."

Question: How do we continue to be united while serving and functioning through diversity?

Answer: "It begins with hard work!...Keeping and maintaining peace and unity in the body of Christ is hard work that takes diligence and commitment."

Thank God we have the Holy Spirit who enables us to do what we cannot do.

1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Notice the action words here: resist, fight, stand firm

Unity doesn't come by osmosis. It doesn't come by happenstance. It doesn't come because I want it to come. We have to fight to keep it.

John 10:10 NIV

[Jesus speaking] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Ephesians 4:1 NIV84

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

"The apostle encourages us as believers to act and live like who we say we are."

My life should match the life of Christ!

"Because I am living like a Christ-follower, my love for you will automatically maintain and keep the unity. I cannot be out of sorts with you and be in correct fellowship with Christ. It doesn't work that way."

The Trinity is a model of this great unity.

**1. One body** - the church is not divided - v. 4

Ephesians 4:4 NIV84

There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

The spiritual church is here and in heaven, yet Christ is going to marry one bride, not two.

## **2. One Spirit - v. 4**

Ephesians 4:4 NIV84

There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—

The Holy Spirit is the one who regenerates and places all believers into the body of Christ. He indwells all believers, not some. He empowers all believers, not some.

## **3. Called to One Hope - v. 4**

All believers have the hope that one day we will all be conformed to the image of Christ.

## **4. One Lord - v. 5**

Ephesians 4:5 NIV84

one Lord, one faith, one baptism

Christ is our headship. He is the Lord over Bridgeway, over all true believers on earth, he is the head.

## **5. One Baptism - v. 5**

All believers are baptized into the body of Christ at conversion. Water baptism is the outward symbol...that we have received Christ, buried with him in baptism and raised with him in newness of life.

## **6. One God & Father of All - v. 6**

Ephesians 4:6 NIV84

one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Question: How do we maintain unity in the body of Christ during this life-long journey?

Remember: God didn't ask us to create unity. Keeping unity begins with...me! I must constantly check my walk with Christ. If my relationship with Christ is right, then my relationship with my fellow man will be right.

Matthew 22:37-40 NIV84

Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The whole Bible message is love God, love people!

"If I can't love people, something is wrong with me!"

Once I get over self, I can see someone else.

"Once I become mature & mighty in Christ...then the process begins where I can become an instrument of peace and not an instrument of divisiveness and separation."

## **Four Fundamental Principles That Will Keep Unity in the Church**

### **1. Humility**

This is the opposite of pride and false humility.

Humility promotes putting others first.

"There is a thin line between humility and humiliation." Quote from Dr. David Anderson

We are not doormats. Being humble does not mean we let people walk all over us.

Philippians 2:6-8 NIV84

[Paul is writing about Christ] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Christ got out of his world, his comfort zone and got into my world and mess.

## 2. Gentleness

Gentleness does not mean weakness.

It is the opposite of being aggressive, rude, hostile, but someone whose emotions are under control.

Ephesians 4:15-16 NIV84

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

## 3. Patience

"Patience is the grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to not be so quick to give up on people. It is an act of self-restraint."

## 4. Bear with One Another in Love

"People are going to make you angry. People are going to hurt you. I am not saying you just automatically emotionally turn it off because you can't do that. But by the grace of God, we learn how to bear up under and forgive and go the extra mile."

It is forgiveness with the idea of restoration. I release you from what you've done to me because I am more concerned with being unified than my feelings.

"If you do not get anything else out of this message...I want you to get this. God asked us as his children to do what we cannot do ourselves."

2 Corinthians 12:9 NKJV

And He [God] said to me [Paul], "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

"So I have the right, I have the privilege, I have the option of going to God and say, 'God, I can't get along with this person, I can't keep this unity, but Lord right now I need the power of the Holy Spirit! I confess my weakness, Lord. I want your strength to be manifested in my life right now, so the power of Christ can rest on me.' Then we can keep unity."

I am so glad that God didn't leave it up to my strength because I would blow it every single time.

Question: How do we tie it all together? How do we make it all happen?

## **Practical Applications:**

### **1. Get Out of Self**

Romans 12:3 NIV

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

We are all uniquely somebody, but when I get into myself, I'm the big problem because by nature we are selfish people.

### **2. Seek to Understand Others**

Matthew 9:36 NIV84

When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

I need to understand YOU, how you think, not how I want you to think.

### 3. Mess up?! Fess up!

Why? Because scripture tells me I am still being conformed.

Please Be Patient With Me  
by James Cleveland

Please be patient with me,  
God is not through with me yet.

Please be patient with me,  
God is not through with me yet.

When God gets through with me,  
when God gets through with me,  
I shall come forth,  
I shall come forth like pure gold.

Verse:

If you should see me and I'm not walking right,  
and if you should hear me and I'm not talking right;  
please remember that God is not through with me,  
when He gets through with me,  
I'll be what He wants me to be.

1 John 1:9 NIV84

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins  
and purify us from all unrighteousness.

### 4. Seek to Be Understood in Love

Proverbs 18:13 NIV84

He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.

Put your listening ears on. God gave you one mouth and two ears.

If we learn to listen more, we'll be able to understand where people are.

## 5. Depend on the Power of the Holy Spirit

John 15:5 NIV84

[Jesus speaking] "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

"Is it possible to have unity in the church? Yes, it is but we have to work on it. It's hard work. It takes commitment and dedication, but we can do it."