

MAGNOLIA MINDS: United we stand...

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Unity seems to be in short supply these days. Everywhere you look there is division and disunity. The news is filled with negativity, social media has become quite anti-social, and disagreement is the favored topic of conversation. Although it's no surprise that a fallen world is marred by division, it should not be a characteristic of the Body of Christ. How can we as believers build, preserve, and pursue biblical unity within our relationships?

Building Unity

Hopefully you have learned that you are the only person on planet earth that you can truly change. This means you have a massive role to play in the process of building unity with others. The Apostle Paul wrote, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (*and women*)" (Romans 12:18). The possibility of peace with all others rises with your degree of love for them, because love is the perfect bond of unity (Colossians 3:12-14). Therefore, you choose to build unity through exercising compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness toward others – even those who disagree with you.

Preserving Unity

Although disunity should not be characteristic of the church, it often is. There are a host of issues that can divide us. Worship style, Bible translations, dress codes, leadership, and the color of the carpet are just a few of the personal preferences that have split congregations. The Holy Spirit's work is to unite us in Christ, but we are commanded to diligently maintain that unity in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-6). In fact, it is our calling to conduct ourselves in a way that sustains the unity of the Spirit among believers. Have you followed the path of peacemaking or peace-breaking in your relationships and church? We help preserve unity when we "show tolerance for one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2).

Pursuing Unity

In discussing religious legalism with the church in Rome, Paul called believers to "pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" (Romans 14:19). Does this describe your attitudes and actions within the church? "Pursue" is a term of action. Are you actively pursuing unity and peace with others by lifting them up? You cannot chase after unity without faithfully serving others. Laying low and staying out of everyone's way does nothing to strengthen the union of the church body. Inactivity and apathy lead to atrophy and decline. Choose to go after unity in your church by humbly serving others according to your spiritual gifting.

Understanding Unity

Biblical unity is not uniformity. We can be united without all being the same. In fact, it is our God-given diversity that makes our Christian unity effective. The Body of Christ is comprised of people of different ethnicities, cultures, languages, ages, education levels, and economic status, all made equal and one in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). We have also been given different spiritual gifts and responsibilities to be exercised within the body (Ephesians 4:7-12). This united diversity glorifies the Lord and enables the body to mature in spiritual health and effective ministry (Ephesians 4:13-16).

Do you embrace the glorious diversity of the church and are you making a faithful contribution to its growth?

We are living in divisive times, but we must not be divided. Neither the politics of this world nor our own personal preferences are worth the loss of our relationships and testimonies in Jesus Christ. In a world of doubt, I choose faith. In the face of hate, I choose love. In days of division, I choose unity. What will you choose?