



Blackfoot Church of Christ

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Unity: Its Essential Attitudes

By Joe R. Price

Ephesians 4:1-16 lays down the divine framework for unity in the body of Christ. Urged to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called," Christians are under obligation to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1, 3). To establish and guard unity in His body (the church, Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16), the Lord here reveals the attitudes (v. 2-3), basis (v. 4-6), gifts (v. 7-13) and objectives (v. 14-16) of unity. Where "the unity of the Spirit" exists, the church is able to glorify God (Eph. 4:3; 3:21). Where division exists, it is manifest that some, by their divisive attitudes and actions, are not approved in His sight (1 Cor. 11:19).

Proper attitudes must exist in our hearts for unity to thrive in the church. Pleas for unity are not enough. A desire for unity must be coupled with practical attitudes of heart plus proper application of the same if we are to attain and maintain unity: "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). Let us briefly consider these five attitudes which promote unity among God's people.

1. **Lowliness.** Unity is hindered when a humble opinion of one's self is absent. A deep sense of one's unworthiness translates into service rather than demanding that one be served. And this enhances unity. Jesus taught us and set the example of humble service for us (Matt. 23:11-12; 20:27-28). When Paul lived among the Ephesian brethren he was "serving the Lord with all humility..." (Acts 20:19).

2. Gentleness (meekness). A gentle spirit is one which is under control. It by no means suggests weakness or timidity. Instead, it is strength under control, devoid of self-interest and directed toward the goodness of God and one's fellows. The meek or gentle person is not occupied with self or the disputes which arise from defending self. In order to maintain unity we must be "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). The meek person does so, not by surrendering principles of truth, but by surrendering self for the sake of truth and peace (Rom. 14:17).
3. Longsuffering. This attitude is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy. It is restraint in the face of provocation (2 Pet. 3:9). If any quality of heart must be expressed as we diligently keep the unity of the Spirit it is restraint in the face of provocation! Rather than retaliate in kind, longsuffering endures, not seeking revenge. Since we benefit from God's longsuffering we must in turn show it toward each other as we live and work together in the Lord's church.
4. Forbearance. The ability to hold up under the strain and stress of trials is at the heart of this word. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure (forbear, jrp)" (1 Cor. 4:12). Forbearance overcomes quarrels about brethren: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13 - KJV).
5. Love. Barclay defined love (agape) as "unconquerable benevolence, undefeatable goodwill." It must be our motive and character (1 Cor. 13:1-7). If we do not love our brother we cannot love God (1 Jno. 4:20-21, 12). Peace holds us together in the Spirit's unity as we love our neighbor as our self (Matt. 22:39).

These essential attitudes, when present, enable us to be effectively bound together in peace (Eph. 4:3). Without them, we will neither attain to nor maintain unity.

Put on a heart of...

By Joe R. Price

Paul told Timothy to join with others who “call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). A pure heart is necessary in order to follow the Lord and appeal to him for the blessings of salvation. James wrote, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (Jas. 4:8). A total devotion to God is necessary in order to purify your heart.

In Colossians 3:12-15, the inspired apostle Paul wrote that Christians are to put on a heart that is different from the world; one that identifies them as the people of God. Consider how you can purify your heart with these qualities:

1. Compassion. A heart that cannot show pity toward others in their time of distress is not the heart of Christ (Matt. 25:34-40).
2. Kindness. The courtesy and thoughtfulness of kindness expresses a heart that is truly interested in others (Eph. 4:32).
3. Humility. Without a humble heart one will never approach God nor be blessed by him (see Jas. 4:6-10).
4. Meekness. A heart that is strong in its convictions and at the same time controlled in its expressions of that conviction can accomplish great things. Meekness is not weakness. It combines strength of faith and self-control to do the will of God instead of the will of man.
5. Longsuffering. A heart that does not act on an impulse, that is not quick to retaliate, is like the heart of God (2 Pet. 3:9).
6. Forbearing and forgiving. To harbor no malice against another when wronged is the essence of forbearance. It does not overlook sin, but it seeks to overcome it through the forgiveness of Christ (Eph. 4:31-32).
7. Love. The purpose of God’s commandments is “love from a pure heart” (1 Tim. 1:5). Loving God with all our heart requires a heart that is completely pure (Matt. 22:37). In like manner, we are to sincerely “love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Pet. 1:22).
8. Peace of God rules. We have been called by the gospel of Christ to be at peace with God and to be at peace with one another (Eph. 2:14-18). A pure heart is at peace with God, with others and with itself.

-From Building Bible Character, pp. 39-40

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- James White remains in the hospital
- Ginger is sick with the COVID
- Brenda (Richard Empey's sister) is sick with the COVID
- Ben will be moving to Pittsburg PA the end of this week.
- Ray & Ginger, as Ray deals with Alzheimer's Symptoms
- Larry, Leukemia Diagnosis
- Jaella Kreh during her pregnancy
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines
- Mark Dunigan is traveling through the area and will be bringing the lessons this morning.

Worship Assignments

Today

Song Leader – Tom Mitchell

Lord's Table – Tom Mitchell

Wednesday

Song Leader – Chad Mitchell

Invitation – David Porter

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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