



A UNIFIED CHURCH

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





A Unified Church

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A Unified Church

SERMON REFERENCE: Ephesians 4:3-7

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2493

A biblically unified church is a wonderful thing. Because this unity comes from the Spirit, we do not produce it; we merely preserve it.

Ephesians 4 tells us that we, as Christians, are to be, "...endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3).

We preserve this sacred unity by recognizing three important concepts from this passage.

First, we must see that the ground of our unity is doctrinal and spiritual. Unity does not mean unison or uniformity. It means we are in agreement on the basic truths of Scripture.

Ephesians 4:4-6 tells us the seven pillars of truth that hold us up and hold us together.

1. **One Body:** the Church, which began in the New Testament and has been kept alive and active to this day.
2. **One Spirit:** the Holy Spirit, the substance of our life, secret of our strength and source of our unity.
3. **One Hope:** the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
4. **One Lord:** Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, always.
5. **One Faith:** God's revealed Word, which we are to earnestly contend for.
6. **One Baptism:** baptized by the Holy Spirit at salvation and brought into the body of Christ.
7. **One God:** The Father, who is above all, through all, and in all.

Once we are unified as a church, then we can see the glory of our diversity. Adrian Rogers says, "Sameness is not unity; unity comes from diversity." God gives us different spiritual gifts that are meant to unite us, not to divide us; they are not toys, they are tools. Though we are unified in our doctrine, our spiritual gifts do not have to march in lock step.

Finally, we recognize that the goal of our unity is maturity.

- We are meant to mature in stature, in how we look more and more like Jesus every day.
- We are to mature in stability, not being swayed by false teachings.
- We are to mature in speech, speaking truth in love without stutter, stammer, or apology.
- And we mature in service toward one another, edifying the body as we grow, ourselves.

Unity, diversity, and maturity—all three are necessary for peace among the brethren. We learn how to get along despite our differences when we work together in harmony.

Life Application

Are you a part of a unified church? Do you serve the body with your spiritual gifts?



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Ephesians 4:3
- b) The desire of God for the church is that we have the unity of the Spirit.
 - i) That we have the bond of peace.
- c) Psalm 133:1
- d) Proverbs 6:16-19
- e) We do not produce this unity; it is called the unity of the Spirit.
- f) But while we do not produce this unity, we are to preserve it.
 - i) That should be our prayer for our churches.
- g) In today's message, we will learn the three basic concepts on which this unity is based.

2) THE GROUND OF OUR UNITY (EPHESIANS 4:3-6)

- a) The ground of our unity is truth.
 - i) It is doctrinal and spiritual.
- b) There are seven basic truths found in the Word of God in Ephesians 4.
 - i) They hold up the entire spiritual enterprise of the church.
 - ii) No one can call himself a Bible Christian who does not believe these seven basic truths.
 - iii) They are the foundation of our unity.
- c) Ephesians 4:3-6
 - i) Do not let anyone say that doctrine does not matter.
 - (1) If a church ceases to hold these great truths, then she will lose her unity.
- d) What do we mean by unity?
 - i) Unity is not unison.
 - (1) Unison is all right if someone is in a choir, but everyone does not have to sing the same note.
 - (a) We can sing in harmony without singing in unison.
 - ii) Unity is not uniformity.
 - (1) We don't have to be a congregation of clones.
 - (2) We don't all have to look alike and dress alike.
 - (3) Uniformity comes from without; unity comes from within.
 - iii) Unity is not union.
 - (1) Union and unity are not necessarily the same.
 - (2) We can be in the same church and not be in unity.
 - iv) Unity is doctrinal and spiritual.
- e) The ground of our unity includes the following seven truths:
 - i) There is one body.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:4
 - (a) That one body is the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - (b) It doesn't say one congregation.
 - (i) The body of Christ is bigger than any church.
 - (2) The church is a spiritual body.



- (a) The church is not a corporation with Jesus as the president, the church is a body with Jesus as the head.
- (3) It is not one denomination.
 - (a) Whether you are a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, if you have given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you have been twice-born, then you are a part of the spiritual body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- (4) There is a local expression of this body.
 - (a) The Bible speaks of the church here and the church there.
 - (i) Because not only is there that great universal church, but there is also the local New Testament body.
 - (b) Every twice-born person should be a member of a local New Testament congregation.
 - (i) That is the plan of God.
 - (c) A church is a unified body with pastor, deacons, and servants.
- (5) If you are a disunified person, if you sow discord in the church, then you do the following two things:
 - (a) You dishonor the head, who is Jesus.
 - (b) You wound and mutilate yourself because we are members of the same body.
- ii) There is one Spirit.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:4
 - (a) This verse speaks of the Holy Spirit who is the substance of our life, the secret of our strength, and the source of our unity.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit is the one who binds us together and tells us that we belong one to another.
 - (3) We do not know everyone's name, but we know the Holy Spirit who dwells in each of us.
 - (a) The Holy Spirit that is in me is in you.
 - (4) Not only does God's Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God, but God's Spirit also bears witness with our spirit that we belong to one another.
 - (5) Vance Havner said that we are not to be wired together by organization, frozen together by formalism, rusted together by tradition, but melted together by one Spirit.
- iii) We have one hope.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:4
 - (2) The Bible calls the Second Coming of Jesus Christ "the blessed hope".
 - (a) Titus 2:13
 - (3) All true believers in Christ are waiting for Jesus Christ to come again.
 - (4) You cannot call yourself a Bible Christian if you do not believe in this one hope, the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - (5) People may have different views concerning the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, such as amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial.
 - (a) We don't have to know the meaning of every detail to be expecting the Lord Jesus to come again.
 - (6) Revelation 22:20
 - (7) In Matthew 24, the Bible speaks about the signs of the times.
 - (a) In verse 8, the word for "sorrows" is the word for "birth pangs".
 - (i) When a woman is going to deliver a baby, she has what is called in this verse "sorrows".
 - 1. They are labor pains.



- 2. There comes a time when the contractions get especially severe and strong.
 - (b) Jesus said that when these things come to pass, then look up.
- (8) We are living in the closing shadows of an age.
- (9) The one and only hope for this world is the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- iv) We confess one Lord.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:5
 - (2) That one Lord is Jesus Christ.
 - (3) The early church didn't call Him Jesus nearly as much as they called Him the Lord Jesus.
 - (a) We need to get in the habit of saying, "The Lord Jesus".
 - (4) Jesus did not come to take sides.
 - (a) When Joshua came against Jericho, a pagan city, he went out to reconnoiter and see what the situation was like.
 - (i) While Joshua was out there, he became aware of a presence behind him.
 - 1. He saw a man with a drawn sword.
 - (ii) Joshua asked the man whose side he was on.
 - (iii) The angel with the drawn sword said that he was on neither side.
 - 1. He had come as the captain of the Lord's host.
 - 2. He was saying that he wasn't for them, he wasn't for you, he had not come to take sides; he came to take over.
 - (iv) Joshua 5:13-14
 - (5) Jesus must always be the Lord of the church.
- v) We have one faith.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:5
 - (2) This one faith is the unified body of truth that we call the Bible.
 - (a) Not "a" faith, but one faith.
 - (b) A body of truth.
 - (3) Jude 3
 - (a) "The" faith, not "a" faith.
 - (b) There is one faith; it is God's revealed Word.
 - (i) We are to earnestly contend for it.
 - (ii) Get a grip on the Word of God and never let go.
 - (4) We don't need a new and modern gospel for a new and modern age.
 - (a) If it is new, then it is not true.
 - (b) If it is not absolute, then it is obsolete.
 - (5) Open the Word of God; analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it.
 - (6) A church may have all other kinds of programs, but they must have this one faith.
 - (7) 2 Timothy 4:7
 - (a) Paul was faithful to the fight, faithful to the finish, and faithful to the faith.
 - (i) We must never waiver.
- vi) We share one baptism.
 - (1) Ephesians 4:5
 - (a) This is not talking about immersion or sprinkling.
 - (i) It goes beyond that.
 - (2) When a person gives their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ.



- (a) At the moment of your salvation, you are placed into the body of Christ.
 - (i) The church is a body with Christ as the head, and we are the members.
- (b) Before you were ever baptized in water, you were baptized with the Holy Spirit of God and into the body of Christ.
 - (i) 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - 1. This is what makes us one.
 - (ii) Water baptism only symbolizes that which takes place when someone gives his heart to Jesus.
- (3) People talk about receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) If you are saved, then you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Nowhere in the New Testament is a believer told to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - (i) We are told to be filled with the Spirit.
 - 1. Ephesians 5:18
 - (ii) The baptism takes place at the moment of salvation.
 - (iii) There may be many fillings, but there is only one baptism.
- vii) We worship one God.
 - (1) He is not Allah; He is Yahweh, Jehovah God.
 - (2) Ephesians 4:6
 - (3) His name is Jehovah, and we do not know Him apart from Jesus Christ.
 - (a) John 14:6
- f) Our unity is found in these seven basic foundational truths.
 - i) They are the ground of our unity.

3) THE GLORY OF OUR DIVERSITY (EPHESIANS 4:7)

- a) God made us one, and God made us different at the same time.
- b) Ephesians 4:7
 - i) Notice the word “but”; he is changing directions.
 - (1) He had been talking about our sameness doctrinally.
 - (2) Then, in contradistinction, he uses the word “but”.
 - ii) The Greek word for “grace” is “charis”.
 - (1) It is a word we get the word “charismatic” from.
- c) God gives different spiritual gifts to different people.
 - i) God made us different in the church.
 - ii) Not only do we have unity, but we also have diversity.
- d) A church is not to be a congregation of clones.
 - i) A church is to have unity in diversity.
- e) This is not talking about diversity about doctrine.
 - i) Romans 16:17
 - ii) There isn’t room for every kind of belief, but there is room for people who have different gifts.
- f) God gave us different gifts that He might make us one.
- g) We each have a grace gift.
 - i) Ephesians 4:7
- h) God gave each of us a gift to serve Him.
 - i) Think of what would happen if every member of a church were to discover, develop, and deploy his gift.



- ii) A spiritual gift is not for your elation.
 - (1) It is not a toy; it is a tool.
- iii) There is a place of service for you in a church.
- i) Sameness is not unity; unity comes from diversity.
 - i) We have unity because we're different.
 - ii) It's the differences that draw us together.
 - iii) We don't have to march in locked step.
- j) One of the difficulties that churches have is that people have different tastes.
 - i) For example, people have different tastes in music.
 - ii) We can be divided over tastes but not over Jesus.
 - (1) We are here to glorify the Lord Jesus.
 - (2) We are to be one body in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- k) We are to celebrate and conserve our diversity.
 - i) We don't all have to sing in unison.

4) THE GOAL OF OUR MATURITY (EPHESIANS 4:13)

- a) Why do we have this unity and this diversity?
 - i) Ephesians 4:13
 - (1) The word "perfect" in this verse means "mature".
- b) Peace comes with unity, diversity, and maturity.
 - i) Little children squabble and fuss.
 - ii) Mature adults learn how to get along with one another.
 - iii) Bickering comes from immaturity.
- c) We are to be mature in stature.
 - i) Ephesians 4:13
 - ii) If you want to know whether you are growing or not, do not measure yourself by another member of the church; measure yourself by Jesus Christ.
 - iii) The measure of ministry is not the size of the buildings, budgets, or Bible study attendance.
 - (1) The measure is if we are becoming more like Jesus Christ.
- d) We are to be mature in stability.
 - i) Ephesians 4:14
 - ii) Get your feet on the rock.
 - iii) Acts 20:29
 - (1) False cults don't produce converts as much as they try to siphon off Bible believers who don't understand because they are not rooted and grounded in the faith.
 - (a) They are like little sailboats that are blown this way and that way.
 - iv) Get a bulldog grip on the truth.
- e) We are to be mature in speech.
 - i) Ephesians 4:15
 - ii) We are not to speak truthless love or loveless truth.
 - iii) We are to speak the truth in love.
 - (1) Truth without love is brutality.
 - (2) Love without truth is hypocrisy.
 - iv) The Bible is a wonderful sword, but it is a poor club.
 - v) Don't be argumentative over small differences.
 - vi) We are never to jettison the truth, but we are to speak the truth in love.



- f) We are to be mature in service.
 - i) Ephesians 4:16
 - (1) Each part helps the other parts so that the whole body is healthy, growing, and full of love.
 - (2) This verse speaks of “joints”.
 - (a) What makes an arm operate and the fingers move?
 - (i) It is because there is a joint.
 - (b) The Greek word for “joint”, “harmos”, is the word we get our word “harmony” from.
 - (i) The body is to be flexible.
 - (ii) The body is to work together.
 - (iii) The body is to be coordinated.
 - ii) We are in business for Jesus.
 - iii) If my ministry makes difficulty for your ministry, then there is something wrong with what you are doing, what I am doing, or what we are both doing.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) The church is to be one in the bond of love.
 - i) There is the ground of our unity.
 - ii) There is the glory of our diversity.
 - iii) There is the goal of our maturity.
- b) If you have not received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then there is a blessing and a fellowship that you know nothing of until you know Jesus.
- c) To be saved means the following:
 - i) That every sin is forgiven.
 - ii) That God, through the Holy Spirit, lives in you.
 - (1) He has baptized you into the body of Christ.
 - iii) When that blessed hope comes or when you die, you will be caught up to meet the Lord in Heaven.
- d) You can be saved by trusting Christ.
 - i) Christ purchased your salvation with His shed blood on the cross.
 - ii) It is your duty and privilege, by repentance and faith, to receive Jesus Christ.
 - (1) Repentance means you turn from the old way.
 - (2) Faith means you put your trust in Jesus.
- e) The greatest thing that you could do is to give your heart to Jesus Christ.
 - i) It is the beginning of a brand-new life and the first day of an eternal life.
- f) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- g) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 4. I'm beginning a series of messages that I'm going to be preaching, God willing, all this month and next month that is going to be a distillation of things that I want you to remember, things that I have tried to teach you for more than 32 blessed years.

Now, if you have Ephesians chapter 4, look up here. I want to tell you a story that I heard about a man who was shipwrecked. He was on a desert island, and he was there by himself: single, all alone. He had to forage for himself. And finally after years, someone came to rescue him. And there he'd taken care of things pretty well. He had a nice house that he'd built, almost like a mansion. Next to the house he had constructed a church, and he even put a steeple on top of it. But then next to that was another fine, magnificent building. Those who came to rescue him said, "What is that big place there?" He said, "Well, that's my house, that's where I live." "What is that next door? It looks like a church." He said, "It is a church. I built myself a church." They said, "Well, what is that other building?" "Oh," he said, "that's another church." He said, "I had an argument in the old one and moved my membership." So many times the problem is on the inside, is it not?

I want to talk to you about unity in the church. My prayer for Bellevue is that she will continue to be, and evermore be, a unified church. And so, this first message in this series of messages is, "Unity in the Church." Now, I want you to look at a particular part of the Scripture here this morning; Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 3. Paul says we are to be, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Is that not beautiful, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? What a beautiful concept. This is the desire of God for the church, that we have the unity of the Spirit, that we have the bond of peace. Psalm 133 verse 1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And in Proverbs 6:19, the Bible also says that God hates him who sows discord among the brethren. Now, this unity is a wonderful unity. We do not produce it. It is called the unity of the Spirit. But while we do not produce it, we are to preserve it. And that is my prayer for this dear church in the years to come.

Now, this unity is based on three basic concepts, and I want us to learn these concepts today because they're very, very important. The first concept that we're going to learn is what I want to call **the ground of our unity**. Now, the ground of our unity is truth; it is doctrinal and spiritual. If you were to go out in the front of this building there at the portico, you would find seven magnificent pillars. And each of those pillars is named for seven basic truths that are found in the Word of God here in Ephesians chapter 4. They hold up the entire spiritual enterprise of our church. No one can call himself a Bible Christian who does not believe these seven basic truths, which are the foundation of our unity.

Now, look again in Ephesians chapter 4 this time, 3 through 6, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Now, again, I want to say that the basis of our unity, the ground of our unity is doctrinal and spiritual. Now, don't let anybody tell you that doctrine doesn't matter. If our church ceases to hold these great truths, she will lose her unity.

Now, what do I mean by unity? Well, I don't mean unison. Now, unison may be all right if you're in the choir, but everybody doesn't have to sing the same note. That would be boring. We can sing in



harmony without singing in unison. And I'm not talking, secondly, about uniformity. We don't have to be a congregation of clones. We don't all have to look alike and dress alike. Somebody said to me, "Do you have to wear a coat and a tie at Bellevue?" Absolutely not. Look, it is not that we come along here in uniforms. Uniformity comes from without; unity comes from within. We're not even union. Union and unity are not necessarily the same. You can be in the same church and not be in unity. Somebody has said you can take two tom cats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline. You have union, but you don't have unity. Now, if you're an animal lover, a cat lover, only an illustration. I'm not suggesting that at all. What do we mean by unity? It is doctrinal and it is spiritual. That is the ground of our unity, these seven truths.

Now let's think about these seven truths. And I want you to get a bulldog grip on these seven truths. Number one: there is **one body**. Do you see that there in Ephesians 4 verse 4? One body. Now, what is that one body? That one body is the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, it doesn't say one congregation. But there is one body. The church is a spiritual body. The church is not a corporation with Jesus as the president; the church is a body with Jesus as the head. That's all of the difference in the world. Now, again, I want to say, not one denomination. Somebody said, "Are you one of those narrow-minded Baptists who think only Baptists are going to Heaven?" I'm more narrow-minded than that; I think a lot of Baptists are not going to make it. But whether you're a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, if you have given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you have been twice-born, you are a part of the mystical body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, there is a local expression of that body. And the Bible speaks of the church here and the church there and the church here and there, because not only is there that great universal church, there is that local New Testament body. Now, let me tell you something. From my study of the Scriptures, I sincerely, honestly believe that every twice-born person ought to be a member of a local New Testament congregation. Do you believe that? Now, you ought to be a member of a local church. Now, you need to be a member of some local New Testament church. That is the plan of God.

I've told about a man one time who came to the Minister of Music and said, "I'd like to sing in your choir." And the Minister of Music said, "Well, are you a member of this church?" He said, "No, sir." He said, "Well, what church are you a member of?" He said, "I'm a member of the invisible church." He said, "Well, I have a suggestion for you. You sing in the invisible choir." No! You see, a church is a unified body here with pastor and deacons and servants, and you need to be a part of this church. There is one church. Now, that brings unity. And may I say, precious friend, that if you are a dis-unified person, if you sow discord in the church, number one, you dishonor the head, who is Jesus, and number two, you wound and mutilate yourself because we are members of the same body.

Now, not only is there one body; there's also one Spirit. Do you see that in verse 4? One Spirit. There he's talking about the Holy Spirit, who is the substance of our life, the secret of our strength, and the source of our unity. The Holy Spirit is what, is the one who binds us together, who tells us that we belong one to another.

Now, most of us here don't know everybody's name; as a matter of fact, I doubt that anyone does. Matter of fact, I'm sure that no one does, except God. We don't know all the other names, but we know the one dear Holy Spirit that dwells in each of us, and that is the source of our unity is the Holy Spirit of God. Sometimes people can't understand it. How can you be so big and yet have a spirit of unity? Because the Holy Spirit that is in me is in you. And not only does God's Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we're children of God, but God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to one another.

I sat down on an airplane. A man sat down beside me. I made up my mind I was going to witness to him. I turned to him and raised the subject of spiritual things. "Oh," he said, "you're a believer, aren't you?"



I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "So am I." And he said, "Mister, I want to tell you something strange." He said, "I felt your spirit when I sat down beside you. When I sat beside you, something in me said, 'He's one of us. He is a believer.'" There is one Spirit.

Dr. Vance Havner has said this, "We're not to be wired together by organization, frozen together by formalism, rusted together by tradition, but melted together by one Spirit."

Now, there's a third basic truth here, and that is we have **one hope**. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." What is that one hope? It is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls His coming "the blessed hope". All true believers in Christ are waiting for Jesus Christ to come again. You cannot call yourself a Bible Christian if you do not believe in this one hope, the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, we have people who have different views of the Second Coming of Jesus. They have technical terms: a-millennial, pre-millennial, post-millennial. Some say, "I don't understand those terms." Well, let me tell you this, folks. You don't have to know the meaning of every detail to be expecting the Lord Jesus to come again. And the longer I've been on the trail, the more I have gotten humble about this matter of prophecy, and I've moved from the Program Committee to the Welcome Committee. And I want to say, as we read in Revelation 22:20, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." There is one hope, and it is the Second Coming of our Lord. And I believe that we're getting very close.

You know, the Bible speaks in Matthew 24 about the signs of the ends of the time, and it talks about earthquakes and calamities and all of these things. And then Jesus said in Matthew 24:8, "All of these are the beginning of sorrows." And the word for sorrows is the word for birth pangs. When a woman is going to deliver a baby, she has what is called there in Matthew 24, sorrows; they are labor pains. You know, from my understanding of the thing, and I am a bonafide father and grandfather, but I've never given birth to a baby, that there comes a time when the contractions get especially severe, especially strong. Jesus said in Luke 21 verse 28, "When these things come to pass, then look up." I believe sincerely, without being a sensationalist, we're living in the closing shadows of an age, and our one hope, and the only hope, of this world is the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And then, Bellevue not only has one Spirit, and Bellevue not only has one hope, but we confess **one Lord**. Now, notice what he says. "One Lord," in Ephesians 4 verse 5, "One Lord." Who is that one Lord? That one Lord is Jesus Christ. "When I come to church, I expect to hear about Jesus." And may it always be. And, by the way, did you know that the early church did not call him Jesus nearly so much as they called Him the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus. I think we need to get in the habit of saying the Lord Jesus.

Now, He has not come to take my side or your side or to take Bellevue's side against some other church, or over some other church, or even over Hollywood or over the casinos, or whatever. When Joshua came against Jericho, Joshua went out one morning. Jericho was a pagan city. And Joshua, the general, went out to reconnoiter and to see what the situation was like. And while Joshua was out there, he was aware of a presence behind him. And he wheeled around and there he saw a man with a drawn sword. And Joshua was astounded. He said to this man, "Who are you? Are you for us or are you for them? Whose side are you on?" And the angel with the drawn sword, said, "Neither. As the captain of the Lord's host, I have come." Do you know what he was saying? "Look. I'm not for them, I'm not for you. I haven't come to take sides. I've come to take over." And that's what we want, here at Bellevue Baptist Church, for the one Lord, the captain of the Lord's host, Jesus Christ Himself, to be the head of this church. Jesus must always, must always, must always, always, always, always be the Lord of our dear church.



And then we have **one faith**. Look, if you will, in verse 5. He mentions there one faith. Now, what is that one faith? He's talking about the unified body of truth that we call the Bible. Not a faith, but not faith, but one faith. He's talking about a body of truth. That's what Jude was talking about there in Jude verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith," the faith, not a faith, the faith, "which was once for all delivered unto the saints." There is one faith. It is God's revealed Word. We're to earnestly contend for it. You get a bulldog grip on this book and never let go. Never let go! There is one faith. We don't need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. If it's new, it's not true. And if it's not absolute, it's obsolete. It is the one faith of this church. And may this sacred desk always have a man who stands behind it, who will open the Word of God, analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it. Now, we can have all other kinds of programs, but we must have this one faith.

The dear old apostle Paul, just before he stepped off the scene, said this in Second Timothy 4 verses 7 and 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He was faithful to the fight, faithful to the finish. He was faithful to the faith. We must never waiver.

Next, we share **one baptism**. Look in Ephesians 4 verse 5, "One baptism." Now, is He here talking about immersion or sprinkling? No, he's talking about something that goes beyond that. When a person gives his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the mystical body of Christ. That is, you are placed, at the moment of your salvation, into the body of Christ. Remember, I said that the church is a body with Christ as the head? We are the members. When are you baptized? Before you were ever baptized in water, you were baptized with the Holy Spirit of God and into the body of Christ. Put this verse down, First Corinthians chapter 12 verse 13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." This is the Holy Spirit of God putting us into the mystical body of Christ. And that's what makes us one.

Now, we believe in water baptism, but water baptism only symbolizes that which takes place when a man or a woman gives his or her heart to Jesus. Sometimes we hear people talk about, "Well, you've been saved. Now, have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost?" Friend, if you're saved, you've already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Nowhere in the New Testament is a believer told to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit; we're told to be filled with the Spirit. The baptism takes place at the moment of your salvation. There is one baptism. There may be many fillings, but there is only one baptism.

And then, we worship **one God**. He is not Allah; He is Yahweh, Jehovah God. Ephesians 4 verse 6, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." His name is Jehovah, and you do not know Him, apart from Jesus Christ. "No one comes to the Father, but by me," the Lord Jesus has said in John 14:6. Now, those are seven basic foundational truths, and our unity is in these truths. That is the ground of our unity.

But now, here's the second thing I want you to notice. Not only the ground of our unity, but **the glory of our diversity**. Did you know that God made us one and God made us different all at the same time? Look now in Ephesians 4 verse 7, "But," do you see the word but? He's changing direction. He's been talking about our sameness, doctrinally, but then He, in contradistinction, uses the word but. "But unto every one of us is given grace." The Greek word for grace is charis. It's a word we get charismatic by, for, "Unto every one of us is given charisma, according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Now, God gave Mark gifts that He didn't give me. God gave Whitmire gifts that He didn't give to Mark. God gave you gifts that He didn't give to your husband or your wife. These are spiritual gifts. God made us different in this church. And so, not only do we have our unity; we have our diversity. I told you ahead of time that this is not to be a congregation of clones. What we have is unity in diversity. Now, I'm not talking



about diversity about doctrine. Romans chapter 16 verse 17 says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” No, there’s not room for every kind of belief, but there is room for people who have different gifts.

God gave us different gifts that He might make us one. And you have a grace gift. “Unto every one of us,” the Scripture says here, “is given grace, charisma.” And God gave you a gift to serve Him. And I’ve been saying now for 30 years, and more, my heart just leaps out of my throat when I think what would happen if every member of our church were to discover, develop, and deploy his gift. A spiritual gift is not for your ecstasy. It’s not a toy; it’s a tool. And you have a spiritual gift. And there is a place of service for you. And God gave us different gifts. God gave us gifts that are different to make us one.

You see, sameness is not unity. As a matter of fact, unity comes from diversity. I’ll give you a perfect illustration of that. Joyce is a girl and I’m a boy. We have unity because she’s different. It’s the differences that draw us together. I’m glad Joyce is not like me. I’d just as soon hug a barrel of pickles as to hug another man. She’s different. Viva la difference! God makes us different. God gifts you a gift, and you a gift, and you a gift, and we don’t have to march in lock step.

I preached a sermon. Before I got started, I asked, “How many of you like liver and onions?” About a 1/3 lifted their hands. I said, “All right. Now, let me ask you another question. How many of you detest liver and onions, can’t stand liver and onions?” About a 1/3 lifted their hands. I said, “Now, I want to ask you another question. How many of you like liver and onions, but only ever so often?” About a 1/3 lifted their hands. I said, “Now, look, folks, we are hopelessly divided.” Here’s a congregation divided. What were we divided over? Not Jesus. We were divided over tastes, and those things don’t make any difference whatsoever.

Now, I hear people say, ‘Well, this is my style of music. That is my style of music.’ Friend, forget that stuff! We’re here to glorify the Lord Jesus. And we’re going to be one body in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, there is the glory of our diversity. We are to celebrate. We are to conserve our diversity. We don’t all have to sing in unison.

Now, here’s the third and final thing. I want you to see, friend, the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, but also **the goal of our maturity**. Now, why do we have this unity and this diversity? Well, Ephesians 4 verse 13 tells us. What’s the goal? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,” the word perfect means mature, “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Peace comes with unity, diversity, and maturity. Little children squabble and fuss; mature adults learn how to get along with one another. Bickering comes from immaturity, and may God preserve this church ever from bickering. We’re to be mature. We’re to be **mature in stature**. Look in Ephesians 4 verse 13, “Unto the stature of the fullness of Christ.” You want to know whether you’re growing up or not? Don’t measure yourself by some other member of this church; measure yourself by Jesus Christ. I’ve frequently told you, the measure of my ministry is this: not the size of these buildings or our budget or our Bible study attendance; are you becoming more like Jesus Christ? We’re to be mature in stature.

We’re to be **mature in stability**. Look in Ephesians 4 verse 14, “That we be henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Get your feet on the rock. Paul told the church in Acts 20:29, he said, “I know that after my departure there will come grievous wolves, not sparing the flock.”

Let me tell you about the false cults. The false cults do not produce converts nearly so much as they try to siphon off Bible believers who don’t understand. And so, because they’re not rooted and grounded in the faith, they’re drawn away into these things. They’re like little sailboats blown this way and blown that



way, "Blown about by every wind of doctrine." Look up here, church. You get a bulldog grip on the truth. You college students, you get a grip on the truth, these seven basic principles. Now, you can be different in a lot of things, but when you grow up, when you mature, you're going to be mature in stature, you're going to be mature in stability.

You're going to be **mature in speech**. Look in Ephesians 4 verse 15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up." Speaking the truth in love. We're not to speak truthless love or loveless truth. We're to speak the truth, never stutter, never stammer, never apologize. Speak the truth, but in love. Truth without love is brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy. Now, the Bible is a wonderful sword; it's a poor club. Don't you be a Bible bully, argumentative over the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Yes, we're never to jettison the truth, but we speak the truth in love. We're mature in stature, mature in stability, mature in speech.

And, listen, **mature in service**. Look in Ephesians 4 verse 16, he says, "For whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Now, if you're like I am, you say, "That's hard for me to understand. What is that talking about?" Well, let me give it to you paraphrased. Each part, in his own special way, helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing, full of love. He speaks here of the joints. What makes my arm operate like this? There's a joint there. How come my fingers go like this? Because there's a joint. You see, look, the Greek word for joint is the word *harmos*. It's the word we get our word harmony from. Now, he's saying here that the body is to be flexible, and the body is to work together. The body is to be coordinated.

I was watching football, and I saw a man go down the field and leap 10,000 miles high, and with soft fingertips catch a ball. Now, ladies, you may not think that's beautiful, but to me that was a work of art, an absolute work of art! And I saw that man, his entire body cooperating to catch a bagful of air that really doesn't make much difference, and to get that bagful of air down a pasture, so what? But I'm tell you something, folks, we're in business for Jesus, and don't you forget it. And if my ministry makes difficulty for your ministry, there's something wrong with what you're doing or what I'm doing or we're both doing. My desire, my prayer, my goal for this church is that we will be one in the bond of love. And God's people said, Amen. There's the ground, the ground of our unity, the glory of our diversity, and the goal of our maturity.

Now, bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, would you pray, "O God, bless this dear church. May it always be unified. May we be one in the bond of love." And if you've not yet received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, there is a blessing, a glory, a fellowship you know nothing of until you know Jesus. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that God, through the Holy Spirit, lives in you and He has baptized you into the body of Christ. And to be saved means when that blessed hope comes, or when we die, we'll be caught up to meet our Lord in Heaven.

You can be saved by trusting Christ. Christ purchased your salvation with His shed blood on the cross. It is your duty and your privilege by repentance and faith to receive Christ. Repentance means I turn from the old way; faith means I put my trust in Jesus. If you'd like to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me and save me, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen."



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