

- **UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL**

- **Ephesians 4:3-6 NLT** “Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

- As a culture, we love the idea of unity. We love the idea of the coexist bumper sticker where everyone respects and loves the other.
- John Lennon:
- *Imagine there's no countries It isn't hard to do Nothing to kill or die for And no religion, too  
Imagine all the people Living life in peace... oh...  
You, you may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one I hope someday you will join us  
And the world will **be as one***
- If people are going to be unified, they have to unite around SOMETHing. You can't just get rid of country borders and religion and social classes and BOOM unity happens. I think John Lennon was a brilliant songwriter and *Imagine* is a beautiful song, but erasing diversity does not create unity.
- Which is WHY the people who have really put thought into how all different types of people can be unified, find SOMETHING to rally around, whether it's love or tolerance, or whatever it may be.
- Civil Rights March...
- The ONLY reason they were able to unite (even though the unity may have been short lived) was because there was something bigger than themselves to unite around.
- And if you **don't have** something bigger than yourself to unite around, then you'll only ever be unified with people who are exactly like you.
- And as we'll see next week, every one in the body of Christ is NOT exactly the same and yet unity is COMMANDED.
- How then unity?
- Well it has to be something that is bigger than us and our ideas.
- We unite around the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- PTOLEMY I was rising to power, but the Macedonian Empire where (Ephesus was the largest city) wasn't just an Egyptian empire. There were also many greeks living among the people.
- What Ptolemy thought he needed was to find common ground. **If he could find them common ground that was bigger than both groups then they would unite.**
- He commissioned a Greek sculptor to construct a god (an idol) who would appeal to all the eclectic people groups of the city, and the statue of SERAPIS was created.
- An idol that looked like a Greek God, but with all Egyptian trappings.
- SERAPIS would be a people-pleaser, a god who simultaneously satisfied the Greek desire for a king, and the Egyptian desire for a deity.
- Ptolemy had created a pluralistic god in an attempt to bring **unity** to his people.

- In the midst of a melting-pot of disappointing gods who can't transform or deliverer, Paul writes to the church in Ephesus and clarifies where their peace and unity actually comes from.
- You want to be united? Unite around something bigger than yourself and bigger than your ideas.
- And that's really the path forward. Jesus already accomplished unity. But here Paul explains to us: Keep the UNITY. Where ELSE are you going to go??? There Only ONE God.
- There's only **ONE SPIRIT (v. 4)**.
- And this is the Spirit that unites us.
- Don't compare yourself to that person.
- Don't tell me they've got something you don't got. You've got the same Holy Spirit.
- **Old people** don't tell me you can't do what the kids can do.
- **In your HUMAN PHYSICAL WEAKNESS, His strength will be made perfect.**
- Kids, Youth. Don't tell me you're waiting until you an adult. You may be a kid but you don't have a Kid version of the Holy Spirit.
- Single people...
- The Holy Spirit is moving IN YOU. And IN ME. And IN HER. And HIM.
- You want to unite around something, unite around THAT.
- **ONE LORD (v. 5).**
- **That's Jesus.**
- It is has never been a popular stance that there is one Lord in all the universe who every human being answers to and that his name is Jesus. And if you believe it, YOU will not be popular either.
- You will be called arrogant, and intolerant, and ignorant. You will be opposed by people you respect.
- "If it is true that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that knowing and trusting him is the only way to a relationship with God, both now and forever, then believing it is not arrogant. It's a humble submission to reality. And teaching [that Jesus is the only way] is not intolerant except in the sense that doctors are intolerant of poison, and tolerant of medicine." **(John Piper)**
- *Forest...*
- **This is what Jesus came to do. Make a path to God for broken and rebellious people.**
- **There's just one Lord. You want to unite around something? Unite around this.**
- You want to keep the unity of the Spirit IN THE BOND OF PEACE like it says in v. 3? Jesus IS the prince of peace.
- No Jesus. No peace.

- **And there's only ONE FATHER (v.6) and He is IN everything and OVER everything...**
- One Father = "same father". Same Father = same family. We are only family. We are the same family.
- THIS is what we unite around. The triune God. Father, Son, Spirit.
- **How do get to the one TRIUNE God? Through the ONE BAPTISM (v. 5).**
- **Romans 6:3-4 NLT** "Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."
- To be baptized means to be immersed, in water or other wise.
- When we put our our faith in Jesus, we are **immersed** into his death where our sins are buried, and we are **immersed** into his resurrection where we become a brand new creation and all the old things pass away and everything is made brand new!

**You want to unite around something. Unite around the ONE that we are baptized into.**

- The One True God.
- **The Trinity is the center of our unity.**
- There is one body, baptized into ONE Lord Jesus, by ONE Spirit, under ONE Father.
- And it is HIS work of salvation — one baptism - unto death. We're incorporated into the death and resurrection of the SON, by the baptism of the SPIRIT, as predestined by the FATHER.
- There is nothing powerful enough and HIGH ENOUGH in the world to UNITE us.
- The BEST success anyone has every had in trying to unite, is when they reach for LOVE.
- And they get SO CLOSE because God IS LOVE. But LOVE is NOT God.
- **The only thing that can unite us like that is the SOURCE of all love — the one from whom ALL love emanates.**
- Humanity will NOT naturally gravitate toward more unity (our culture now).
- **"Keep the unity in the bond of peace?"** it says. How could we ever have peace OUT THERE until we have peace IN HERE.
- Jamie Winship... Conflict in here = Conflict out there. Peace in here = Peace out there.
- We don't need to change legislation to bring peace. Legislation only affects people's actions. What needs to change is people's hearts. And only the Father, by the power of the Spirit, through the finished of Jesus on the cross, can change people's hearts.
- **Ephesians 4:3-6 NLT** "Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as

you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

- **“Make every effort to keep yourselves united”**
- **“Make every effort to KEEP”**
- **It’s already done. We just gotta preserve it. The UNITY was accomplished already.**
- **Ch. 2. The middle wall of separation (the wall of hostility between us has been torn down). Now he’s saying, “NOW LIVE LIKE IT.”**
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- I’ve only got one brother...
- Mom: “Treat each other like your’e actually brothers! Live in a way that demonstrates physically what is true about you biologically.”
- That’s what Paul is saying here.
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- You can’t ACTUALLY be disowned or truly divided on a familial level, is what Paul is saying.
- The way the second half of our passage reads in the original language is that **the bond of unity is as indestructible as God himself** (one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one father, one faith)
- The bond is unbreakable.
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- When we were adopted into God’s family, we were not adopted as only children. We were adopted in a FAMILY with SIBLINGS, and the bond that we are bound by is even stronger than the blood of ethnicity or family names. We are bound by the name and blood of Jesus Christ.
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- That’s your family. That’s your sister. That’s your brother.
- Jesus wasn’t totally in sync with everyone who followed Him, but you know what He said about them **(Matt. 12)? “THESE are my brothers and my mothers and my sisters”**. I.e. THIS is my family.
- **“I don’t care if you like your siblings. But you WILL respect them.”**
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- **We are ONE BODY (v. 4).** No matter what local church you go to, there is only one Universal Church. We’re IT. We’re what God uses to bring His light, love, and life to the world.
- We’re the BODY. And in the body every member is CRITICAL.
- **1 Cor. 12: “when one suffers we all suffer.”** Everything you do affects me and vice versa.
- **It doesn’t matter how insignificant you may feel in the body of the body of Christ, friend if you’re not good, then we’re not good.**
- **There is ONE BODY. It’s family.**
- **The Church is a covenant community. It is a family. You were born again into a family. And you don’t get to choose the families that you were born or adopted into.**
- And you didn’t get to choose this one. The Father chose YOU.
- **My siblings...**

- Don't tell me that you don't like the way so and so dresses. Don't tell me you don't like the way those parents prefer to parent their kids or that it creeps you out that so and so prays in tongues.
- WHO CARES! We do not unite around these things.
- **We unite around a triune God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- Recent meeting...
- AS IF we didn't all stand on the SAME HILL where the SAME JESUS was crucified to UNITE ALL PEOPLES under SAME FATHER, by the SAME SPIRIT.
- **"FATHER! Jesus said, "I'm begging that they would make them ONE EVEN AS YOU AND I ARE ONE (John 17:21) Church, WHO CARES what I think? Who cares what we think?"**
- **We don't die on the hills of our ideals.**
- We don't die on the hill of...
- **THOSE HILLS ARE WHERE UNITY GOES TO DIE.**
- We don't die on those hills. We die on the hill of Calvary with Jesus.
- Reality has kind of always been a hodgepodge of people from different traditions...
- Homogeny is not the goal in the body of Christ. And I need to preach this to myself as well.
- "Normal" Christian.
- There is nothing normal about you. You were uniquely designed in the image of God.
- You're wonderful and beautiful and powerful.
- There is diversity in the body and it is good.
- **Where it becomes a problem is when our DIFFERENCE become our hills that we die on.**
- **But if we're going to get OFF our hills that we really enjoy living on, it's going to take some humility, which is why last week's verse came before this week's passage.**
- **Humility is a prerequisite to unity.**
- I don't think you can have unity without humility.
- **Humility should be able to look at every person in the body of Christ and say "I value what you bring to this table even if I don't 'get' it."**
- I was a potluck recently ... someone brought tomato's...
- What's your tomato?...
- **Here's my two questions about whatever that stuff is for you:**

- **1. Are you able honor and value people in the body of Christ who are different than you?**
- Are able to look at the carrier of that tomato and find value in them and what they bring to the table even though it's not your preferred way?
- If not, I want you to see different.
- Gospel...
- **The gospel says that Jesus humbled himself and showed you honor even when you brought nothing to His table. (washing disciples feet).**
- You had nothing to offer him and what did he do? He didn't just tolerate you. He cared enough about you to lay down his own rights for you.
- **2. Are you willing to compromise, learn, and grow? What if, just maybe, you don't have it all figured out?**
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- Pride says "you owe me respect". Humility says I owe YOU respect. And when you're humble enough to owe me, and I'm humble enough to owe you, then we've taken the first step toward maintaining unity.
- I can love you and honor you and respect you AND **learn from you** EVEN if I don't totally get you.
- **The problems arise when pride** takes over, and when **conforming others into the image of me**, instead of the image of Christ, becomes the goal.
- **The problems arise when we think we've figured** it out and we start judging others who we thing HAVEN'T.
- **The problems arise when fear** leads us instead of love.
- "We have more faith in Satan to lead us astray, than we do in God to keep us." - **Peter Russel**
- IT IS OK to desire that a person has their capacity expanded.
- It's ok for the Bible person (for instance) to desire someone else to know more scripture, and for the Holy Spirit person to desire someone to prophesy more. Both of those things are biblical and good.
- But prophetic person, don't look down on someone because they don't see visions. Bible person don't look down on someone because they don't have scripture memorized.
- **Humility says that I'm willing to lay aside my personal ideals for the sake of love and unity.**
- This is what Jesus did on our behalf. You have a hard time with humility, ask God to STUN you with this good news:
- **Philippians 2:6-8 NLT** "Though he was God he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position

of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

- **Humble ourselves and recognize that our way is not the only way.**
- **Be willing to not have people conformed into our image.**
- **Look for value and honor in every other person in the body of Christ.**

**This is what we see in Jesus, and what humility and love looks like.**

**Close:**

- We in spiritual war.
- Need to link up shield. Shields protected each other's exposed parts.
- Gotta get each other's backs. Not stab each other's backs.
- We don't have to be a mile apart for our dis-unity to affect our strength.
  
- There is so much OUT THERE that will come against us. We can't let it come from IN HERE as well.
- Now is not the time to get caught up in petty differences or disagreements. Now is the time to have each other's backs; to fight for one another. And (like **Hebrews 10** tells us) to **"encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." (Hebrews 10:25 NLT)**
- **We've only got ONE HOPE (v. 4)**, and it is the same glorious hope of a future that each one of us have. I want to spend my time encourage you with THAT. Not fighting or keeping my distance because of our differences.
- We gotta know who our enemy is. It's it not that person sitting next to you (or across the room) **"We don't wrestle against flesh and blood (people), but against principalities and power, rulers of darkness and spiritual forces of wickedness in high and low places." (Eph. 6)**
- You want to fight somebody? Fight the devil. But don't do his job for him by coming against brothers and sisters.
- If the devil can't get us from the outside then he will get us from the inside. United we stand. But Divided we fall.

**"Do it now!"**