

How to be United

We are all unique. From the time we are born until we take our last breath, we continue to shape who we are. Through this life long journey our paths will intersect with many others who are just as unique as we are. During these seasons we can agree, disagree, be aligned, and be out of sync. The reality is there are all sort of things, events, causes that unify people (Olympics, sports, politics, clubs, etc...). There is something unique about Christian Unity. Though believers in Christ have differing cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, gifts, passions, personalities and experiences; God has called us to be unified in the faith. In John 15, Jesus describes our connection to Him like that of a vine.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." John 15:1-8 NIV

Only in union with Christ can we bear fruit and truly be His disciples. Just as a branch receives its life and nourishment from the vine, we too receive our spiritual life and health from this fusion in Christ. Think with me for a minute, if we are not united to Christ, we are not saved, we have no forgiveness, and no redemption. If we are not united to Christ, we are lost and without hope. Christ is everything; therefore, to be united with Jesus gives us everything"

When we understand this union, we realize its significance to our identity, to our spiritual growth, to our daily lives as believers.

Keeping in mind Jesus' illustration in John 15, and how our foundation towards unity is in our belief in Him. Paul shares with us some very practical and real ways for each of us to play a unique role in be unified in Christ in Ephesians chapter 4:

Be Humble

"with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love" Ephesians 4:2

Wow there is so much packed in this one verse from Paul. To be united, A humble person is willing to sacrifice their ego and desires for the sake of the others. Being humble has a calming effect and an awesome ability to be patient when dealing with any situation.

You gotta have Grit

"eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4: 3

We are a mess and make mistakes and will let each other down. This is OK...We can't expect perfection from others or our church because you will be disappointed. To be united takes hard work. You must be willing to put in the effort to make unity really happen.

Celebrate Uniqueness

"However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ." Ephesians 4:7

Each of us have God Given gifts...use them!! To be united we all need to at the same time understand and embrace the gifts and talent of others. Problems and conflict come into play when a person with one gift looks down on others or don't understand others gifts and talents, who do not show the same gifts and talents they have.

Feel the Fear...And do it anyways

"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church." Ephesians 4:15

One of the main contributors to "Disunity" is Conflict. No one enjoys conflict. There will be times that you will need to say hard things to someone. Don't delay! no matter how anxious or fearful you may be of the conversation or situation. Embrace this feeling and go for it! Being humble and communicating in a loving way is so important. As you do this with one another God will help you grow and will honor whatever the situation.

When WE are united the result is seeing Jesus glorified. When we can apply Gods word in a practical way, when we shift our focus to Him, it strengthens us as believers. This unity can draw the interest of those who don't believe, don't know, or may be riding the fence about who God is. To be United is soo worth the effort!