

## Unity – Eph 4.4–11

### INTRODUCTION:

I'm convinced that the words "family" and "dysfunctional" are actually the same words, spelled in two different ways. The complexity of family politics makes the politics of the Cold War look like a child's game. To put it differently, the only reason we know that blood is thicker than water, is because we've had ample opportunity to see both spilled all over the kitchen floor from time to time.

But our hopes for the family are much greater, aren't they? When we get married, we hear "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the family of the church, we have the words of Jesus: *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*<sup>2</sup>

We've already laid groundwork for how to be a godly family. You have a calling on your life, Paul says in vs 1. And if we have been called by God to be a follower of Christ, Paul says that we must walk in a worthy manner. A worthy manner means with humility, with gentleness, with patience. A worthy manner means with tolerance for one another in love, and eagerly preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now Paul tells us why this is true. He tells us that unity and diversity are gifts for the family of the church and for the nuclear family.

### UNITY (4-6):

Note first the immense stress that Paul puts on his readers to be unified. The sound of the word "one" is something like the sound of a hammer on a nail:

***one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*<sup>3</sup>

### Our Unity ...

#### **One Body:**

There is one chapter where this word is twice as often as any other chapter in the entire Bible: 1Co 12, where Paul is talking about the unity of the body of Christ – that is, the church. *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the*

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<sup>1</sup> Mat 19.6

<sup>2</sup> Joh 13.34–35

<sup>3</sup> Eph 4.4–6

*members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.<sup>4</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.<sup>5</sup>*

Likewise, in the nuclear family: *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. Why is this? Because a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.<sup>6</sup>*

### **One Hope:**

With us the word ‘hope’ is sort of like the word ‘luck’. “I hope everything works out,” we say, with fingers crossed, knocking on wood, and whatever other kind of superstitious charms we may be accustomed to using.

But not so with Paul. Earlier in this book, he tells the Ephesians that he is *remembering them in his prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.<sup>7</sup>*

Hope is unrealized, but it’s not unreal. It’s not a hope as in, “I may have this long-lost second great uncle on my mother’s side who, perhaps, is related to a Rockefeller and may, just possibly, leave me some money when he dies.” It’s an inheritance that is a surety, because we’ve seen the will, looked at the signature in Christ’s blood, have a copy of the will witnessed by the Father and the Spirit and that copy sits on our shelf at home.

### **One Faith:**

I’ve said many times that ‘faith’ is a dual sided thing in Scripture. Faith is both the set of propositional statements that define what we believe and faith is also the absolute reliance on those propositional statements. There are not many faiths.

Paul writes later in this chapter that he wants us to *attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood ... so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.<sup>8</sup> And at the same time, earlier in the letter, Paul has written about the Ephesian’s confidence in Christ: *we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Christ.<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> 1Co 12.12–13

<sup>5</sup> 1Co 12.27

<sup>6</sup> Eph 5.28, 31

<sup>7</sup> Eph 1.16–19

<sup>8</sup> Eph 4.13–14

<sup>9</sup> Eph 3.12

There is one set of proper information regarding the truth and one set of proper responses to that truth – and both are called “faith.”

### **One Baptism:**

Then finally, one uniform, one symbol of our unity, one identification. To use the imagery from last week, we have all gotten into the same boat with Noah and are navigating the same waters. As Paul tells the Romans, by baptism we are identified with Christ in his death and we are identified with him in the newness of real life.<sup>10</sup>

### **Is To Look Like The Unity Of The Triune Godhead – One God:**

We are one body, we rely on one hope, we believe in one Lord Jesus, and we have one baptism – even as God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one.

This is not an explanation of the Trinity – this is an application of the Trinity. And though it’s a bit hard to miss, let me state the obvious: our unity is to be like the unity of the godhead. God is ONE Spirit, Lord (Jesus), and God the Father. We, God’s people, are ONE body, hope, faith, and baptism. The Holy Trinity’s unity is the template for our unity. Our unity either is an analogy for the Holy Trinity (reflecting the image of God in humanity) – or it is a perversion of it.

To put it another way: we are unified in Christ if we are in Christ at all. If we are not unified in this one body, one hope, one faith, one baptism; then we are not in Christ at all.

### **APPLICATIONS:**

#### **Necessary:**

As unity is essential to the Godhead – it is part of its very nature – so unity is essential for us in our marriages, with our children, and between us, as brothers and sisters. It’s essential, not important, nor helpful, nor nice, but rather essential and necessary.

These are not things you can do if you feel like it, or if you feel moved by the Spirit, or if you have a sense of peace about it, or after you pray about it. If you called as a follower of Christ – you must walk this way. If you don’t walk this way and are not increasingly in this kind of worthy walk, you are not a follower of Christ.

Humility, gentleness, patience; tolerating one another in love, earnestly preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace – these are the marks of Christian unity: both in the church and in our families. *A new commandment I give to you, that you*

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<sup>10</sup> *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6.4)*

*love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*<sup>11</sup>

Are we growing in these things? Are YOU growing in these things? It's not a neutral state. You are either contributing to godly peace and unity in your family and among the brothers and sisters – or your are not.

We cannot pray for the church of Christ “where it is divided, reunite it” unless we are willing to be an instrument of that unity in the truth. And what is it in your family that is contributing to disunity? If it's a matter of holiness, then true holiness will ultimately lead to unity – so by all means carry on. But if not, what are you trying to accomplish?

We need to make real unity based on this real faith a far higher priority. If we give less effort to setting everyone else straight and far more effort to setting ourselves straight, there would be far more peace and unity both in the church and in the home.

**Desireable:**

“A glorious bond is this; with this bond let us bind ourselves together with one another and unto God. This is a bond that bruises not, nor cramps the hands it binds, but it leaves them free, and gives them ample play, and greater courage than those which are at liberty. The strong if he be bound to the weak, will support him, and not suffer him to perish: and if again he be tied to the indolent, him he will rather rouse and animate. “Brother helped by brother,” it is said, “is as a strong city.” This chain no distance of place can interrupt, neither heaven, nor earth, nor death, nor any thing else, but it is more powerful and strong than all things.

Now then, what impairs this bond? Love of money, passion for power, for glory, and the like, loosens them, and severs them asunder. How then are we to see that they be not cut asunder? If these tempers be got rid of ... For hear what Christ says, *because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.*<sup>12</sup> Nothing is so opposed to love as sin.

Let us therefore follow after love; it is a safeguard which will not allow us to suffer any evil. Let us bind ourselves together. Let there be no deceit amongst us, no hollowness. For where friendship is, there nothing of the sort is found.

Paul does not simply say “let us love;” but let us “follow after love.”<sup>13</sup> There is need of much eagerness: she is soon out of sight, she is most rapid in her flight; so many things are there in life which injure her. If we follow her, she will not outstrip us and get away, but we shall speedily recover her.

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<sup>11</sup> Joh 13.34–35

<sup>12</sup> Mat 24.12

<sup>13</sup> 1Co 14.1

- The love of God is that which united earth to Heaven.
- It was the love of God that seated man upon the kingly throne.
- It was the love of God that manifested God upon earth.
- It was the love of God that made the Lord a servant.
- It was the love of God that caused the Beloved to be delivered up for His enemies, the Son for them that hated Him, the Lord for His servants, God for men, the free for slaves.
- Nor did it stop here, but called us to yet greater things. Yes, not only did it release us from our former evils, but promised, moreover, to bestow upon us other much greater blessings.

For these things then let us give thanks to God, and follow after every virtue; and before all things, let us with all strictness practice love, that we may be counted worthy to attain the promised blessings; through the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, to the Father together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, might, and honor, now and for ever and ever. Amen.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Family Ethics – Unity**

Ephesians 4.4-6

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, \* with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. \* There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4.1–6)*

1. Review: Walking in a worthy manner
  - 1.1. According to our salvation (Eph 1.3-13)
  - 1.2. Comprised of:
    - 1.2.1. Humility
    - 1.2.2. Gentleness
    - 1.2.3. Patience
  - 1.3. With the goals of:
    - 1.3.1. Showing forbearance in love
    - 1.3.2. Eagerly maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
2. Description Of The Outcome

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<sup>14</sup> This extended quote is from Chrysostom’s Homily IX on Ephesians, chapter iv, verses 1–3, [ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.iii.iv.x.html](http://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.iii.iv.x.html).

## 2.1. Our Unity ...

2.1.1. One Body: Both in the church (1Co 12.12–13, 27) and in the family (Eph 5.28, 31).

2.1.2. One Hope: Reality unrealized, but not unreal (Eph 1.16–19).

2.1.3. One Faith: Biblical faith is both truth (Eph 4.13–14) and absolute confidence in that truth (Eph 3.12).

2.1.4. One Baptism: Identified with Christ in both his death and his “newness of life.” (Rom 6.4)

## 2.2. Looks Like The Unity Of The Trinity

2.2.1. God: Father, Son, Spirit, are one (unified in their diversity)

2.2.2. That’s how we must appear.

## 3. Applications

3.1. Necessity: must be your occupation (Joh 13.34–35)

3.2. Desirable: must be your joy (1Co 14.1)