

Essential Truth Series

#7 - Unity

Stark Rd. Gospel Hall

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Primary texts: John 17: 20-23, Rom.12:3-16, 1 Cor.1:10-13, I Cor.12:4-31, Eph. 4:1-16

1. Definition: The state of being one, singleness // a whole made up of separate elements // full agreement, harmony.

A frequent misconception: Unity = Uniformity

Unity is very different than uniformity. Uniformity describes distinct entities that are identical; Unity describes entities that though individually very different, together make up a functional whole.

Example of uniformity: A shipment of automobile parts (i.e. tires) may be identical (uniform), but combined they form nothing useful.

Example of unity: An automobile is made up of thousands of unique parts that when assembled, make up a highly useful machine.

Likewise the picture of unity in the scriptures is of many believers being one body with a common goal and purpose such that we “Speaking the truth in love, (we) may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From 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. (Eph. 4:15-15)

2. Unity Defined in the Godhead

a. Distinct persons yet one in essence and nature.

“I and *my* Father are one”. (John 10:30) - Father and Son

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another (“allos”, another of the same kind) Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16) - Son and Spirit

b. Distinct persons yet one in purpose, and working toward one end.

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” (John 5:17)

“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” (John 5:19)

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” (John 5:21)

“Quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18)

c. Summary

- God is one
- God includes three distinct persons
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work toward one end
- Each Person of the Godhead has a distinct role

3. Unity a reality in the Church which is His Body

“The Church which is His body” is a term used to describe a scripturally defined group that includes all believers from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture (also referred to as the “Bride of Christ”)

Of this group the scriptures say the following:

a. Jesus’ Prayer

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:20-23)

b. That prayer answered

“But all these (*gifts*) worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.” (1 Cor. 12:11-14)

c. All believers are:

{PRIVATE}Children of one family	one Father	John 20:17
Disciples in one school	one teacher	John 13:13-35
Sheep in one flock	one shepherd	John 10:16
Members of one body	one head	Eph. 4:15
Stones in one building	one foundation	1 Peter 2:3-5

d. Practical ramification of this truth:

We should enjoy the fellowship of all believers as much as possible. This should have a balancing effect on our understanding of separation.

We are not separate from other believers (Moral sin (1 Cor. 5) and trouble makers (Rom. 16:17) being an exception), but separate from unscriptural organizations or fellowships, even if they are composed of true believers.

Remember, assembly Christians will share heaven with all true believers!

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal 6:9-10)

4. Unity is a Necessity in the Assembly

While the Local Church or Assembly is clearly distinct from the Body of Christ, where unity is concerned many of the same principle apply, and have very practical implications.

The Apostolic writer applies the **one body** principle to the Assembly.

Rome (Rom. 12:5)

Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10-13, 10:17, 12:12)

Ephesus (Eph. 4:25)

Colosse (Col. 3:15)

The practice of Unity

a. We are all One

- A common Lord, faith and Life

“*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. (Eph 4:5-6)

- A common Goal

“That ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 15:6)

“That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (Phlp.1:27)

- A common Love (Philio or brotherly love)

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Php. 2:2-4)

“*Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”(Rom. 12:10)

- A common Significance or value

“But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:” (1 Cor. 12:20-22)

- A common care

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. *Be* of the same mind one toward another. (Rom 12:15-16)

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. ...

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.(Rom 15:1-3,7)

Food for Thought

Do I view myself as an integral part of the assembly? (i.e. is the assembly we or they?)

Do I view others as vital to the health of the assembly?

Am I contributing to the environment of unity in the assembly, or am I divisive?

b. We are all different

- Each has special significance

“For the body is not one member, but many. ... If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (1 Cor. 12:14,17-18)

- Each has unique responsibility

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ... Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith” (Rom 12:5,6)

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From 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. (Eph 4:15-16)

Food for Thought

Am I interested in knowing how God wants me to function in the assembly?

Am I exercising my gift to my best ability? If not me, Who?

When I see a lack or a gap, do I try to help / fill it, or do I complain?

Is the assembly strengthened by my participation?

Do I feel I need to force others to be like me?

c. God finds delight in our Unity

“Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.” (Psalm 133:1-3)
Unity delights God’s heart and refreshes Him!

5. Unity is Anticipated Between Assemblies

Unity between assemblies is based on a common faith, not human organization.

“No such custom, neither the churches of God.” (1 Cor. 11)

Doctrinal letters to be traded between assemblies (Col. 4:16)

6. Misc. Quotes

Harmony of Unity

“Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers [meeting] together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become ‘unity’ conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship.” A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*

Power in Unity

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn’t. “What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?” asks Linus. “These five fingers,” says Lucy. “Individually they’re nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.” “Which channel do you want?” asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, “Why can’t you guys get organized like that?” Source unknown