

UNITY IN A DIVIDED WORLD

November 12, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

We live in a world and culture that is one of the most divided in recent memory. We begin to ask ourselves, how can we be unified in the church when there are so many people with so many different opinions in so many areas. So we wonder what would that unity look like and how do we get there? As we venture into the scriptures in this lesson, it will not take long to realize what an important issue this is. Let's start our lesson as we read from Paul's letter to the Philippian Church:

Philippians 2:1-11 "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Paul says, if you have any encouragement from being unified with Christ, or comfort from his love and common sharing in the Spirit, **"then make my joy complete"**...by being unified, like minded, Jesus being our example.

Starting in verse 6 through 11, we see a song that the church would sing. We know that this was a very illiterate culture and this would be one way that God's people would learn.

Pastor Randy used a Junior High School band as an example. Many times a JH band can be out of tune; let's be honest, it can be downright painful. But when there is unity and the band is in tune, it can be beautiful.

We don't make or create unity, we have already been made one in Christ. It is only Jesus who can do this; who can make us be "in tune".

UNITY IS NOT:

- **Conformity:** It is not about acting, looking and talking the same way.
- **Proximity:** We can have hundreds, even thousands of people together in a room, arena or stadium, but it doesn't mean there is unity there.
- **Unanimity:** The truth of the matter is, to be in agreement on everything will normally be a cult.

Unity is so important. This is the only explanation why the Devil works so hard to bring discord and division between God's people. Although we can't create unity, we still need to contend for it.

There are four ways this will happen:

Tuning our lives to Christ (2:1-2)

1. **TUNE TO GRATITUDE, FOUND FROM LIFE IN CHRIST.**

Even though we have GPS in our vehicles, people still end up crashing into trees and driving into rivers. When it's all said and done, the number one reason, appears to be the wrong starting place. Can you imagine if our starting point was thankfulness and gratitude to God.

The starting point is gratitude and encouragement

Philippians 2:1-2 "Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."

"A sign of unity, is increased thankfulness rather than fault-finding"

2. TUNE TO HUMILITY EMBODIED BY CHRIST (2:3-4)

It is about many members humbling themselves (like Jesus) and being together as a family. Pastor Randy talked about a young lady who was a very good singer; but her instructor told her, "you can be a great singer, but a terrible choir team member". Sometimes we need to lower our voice and not stand out.

It is far more important to be like Jesus and humble yourself and serve.

Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

- **Selfish Ambition:** Success at the cost of relationship
- **Vain Conceit:** Obsession with self that is inspired by insecurity. It's when we self-promote and combine it with self-importance.

"A decreasing level of conflict in our life is a sign of maturity"

3. TUNE TO THE MUSIC CREATED BY CHRIST (2:5-8)

Don't search for people who think the same as you about everything, or like what you like; actually that's narcissistic. We need to be the type of people that acknowledge we may disagree with others but I/we still love them. We will find that people feel that being heard is being loved.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he focused on the hurt. He stepped into her world; that's a sign of unity and what he wants us to do also.

Phillipians 2:5-8 "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!"

"A sign of unity is to lower yourself rather than exalt yourself"

4. TUNE TO WORSHIP INSPIRED BY CHRIST (2:9-11)

To truly know Christ, is to know the sacrifice he made for us and magnify and exalt him. When we see his sacrifice, how can we not worship him. With his sacrifice before us, the petty things that bring division seem so insignificant.

Phillipians 2:9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"A sign of unity is the degree to which we magnify the sacrifice of Jesus"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We truly live in a terribly divided world and yet we are called to unity in the body of Christ and in our local churches. What are some of the divisions in the world that cause so much division in the church?
2. Discuss the three things that are not unity.
3. Randy talked about the fact that only Jesus can cause us to be "in tune". He identified four ways that we will be "in tune". Discuss the first way; "tune to gratitude found from life in Christ".
4. Discuss the second; "tune to humility, embodied by Christ".
5. Number three is; "tune to the music created by Christ".
6. And the last; "tune to worship inspired by Christ".