

That They May Be One: The Importance of Unity in the Church



John 17
Part 2



1. Unity among churches is a good thing.

John 17:20-21 - My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.

1. Unity among churches is a good thing.

1 Corinthians 1:10-13 - I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some people from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you....

1. Unity among churches is a good thing.

...What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

Reasons why we sometimes see unity with other churches as a bad thing:

- (a) Sometimes it is.
- (b) Competitiveness.
- (c) We assume they are not Christians because they do things differently.
- (d) Views on prophecy (one-world church).

2. Unity with other churches is more than simply not fighting with them.

John 17:20-21a - My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.

Ephesians 4:1-5 - As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

3. There are limits to the kind of unity that Jesus is talking about in John 17.

(a) We can't have unity with churches that deny central truths of Christianity.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God...

...As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

3. There are limits to the kind of unity that Jesus is talking about in John 17.

- (a) We can't have unity with churches that deny central truths of Christianity.
- (b) Unity needs to be limited when the other church's teachings are dangerous for our congregation.
- (c) Unity needs to be limited when the other church's practices violate our consciences.

4. Unity needs to be based on truth.

**John 17:17 - Sanctify them by the truth;
your word is truth.**

Final Points:

1. We need to desire greater unity.
2. Unity can only come by the power of God.
3. True unity can only come when we value the truth enough to argue.
4. We need to be honest about what divides us.
5. We need to work together where we can.