



The Beautiful Community: Unity

Key idea:

The Church has been given a unity that flows from the life of the Trinity, but we must work to maintain this unity in practice.

Key text:

Ephesians 4:1-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Key points:

1. The Church is one and exists in a unity that flows from the Trinity - Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. A unity based upon the Trinity is not uniformity, but a unity in diversity. This is how the Church grows and becomes strong.
3. Even though we are given unity in the Spirit by God, we must work hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit against every form of sin that would undermine it.
4. The unity of the Spirit requires character traits such as humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love. These traits are essential if we are to restrain our own preferences, desires, and inclinations in order to walk in unity with other believers.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?

2. Why is it important to understand that the Church is one? What things does Paul list that unite all believers? What does Paul stress this so strongly in this passage?
3. Why is it important to understand that the unity of the Church is a Trinitarian unity? How is this different than uniformity? How does it affect what I expect the Church to look and operate?
4. It is certainly easier to achieve unity with others that are very similar to me in their background, experiences, culture, and preferences. Should a local church achieve unity by simply having members who are similar in all of these areas? Why or why not?
5. If the unity of the Church is a gift of God to us, why do we still have to work hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit? How can this be, and what makes it necessary?
6. Is it enough to confess the unity of the faith and the Church, or does God command us to work towards this in practice?
7. Why does Paul list several character traits as being related to maintaining the unity of the Spirit? Is this list of humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love all that is required? If not, what other character traits would be helpful? What sinful traits would undermine unity?
8. How do I determine if something is worth breaking fellowship with someone? Can I name things that I would NOT compromise for the sake of unity?
9. Is there anyone I am unable to walk in unity with at present? How can I work to see the reconciliation Christ purchased achieved in this relationship? What will I do this week to begin attempting to see unity restored?
10. Who will I call to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to call?

Preview of next week: The Beautiful Community: Diversity (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)