

THE POWER OF UNITY

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We have a statement that we use in our church that has highlighted our hearts to come together over a vision God gave us for our city and region, "We can do more together than we could ever do apart." It's a statement that becomes a clarion call to fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17;

*"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." **John 17:22-23 (NASB)***

This coming together that we refer to as unity, is not only a position we have in the truth of Jesus, but it also a process that Holy Spirit purposes for us to live out the power of the Gospel as His Church. The word unity means agreement, harmony, accord, unison and union. It is a union that is not based on a preference, but on the conviction of God's Truth. It is place of fellowship that when added to synergy, it multiplies our ability to do more than we could ever imagine.

Charles H. Spurgeon, that great British Pastor said, *"Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel."* Charles H. Spurgeon, The Essence of Separation, quoted in *The Berean Call*, July, 1992, p. 4.

At the very onset of this teaching, it's paramount to realize that unity is not conformity to one another; but Conformity to CHRIST! And it is the unity of the Spirit that brings the Unity of the Church, which causes us to reflect the passion and presence of Jesus in the earth. With that said, it is vital that we as God's People, strive to keep this unity of the Spirit. Ephesians 4:3 says, *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* It also says in Ephesians 4:11-16, *"And He gave some as*

*apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.** ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

So a direct result of this ‘equipping’ process is seeing the Church “*attain to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to be mature, to the measure and stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*”. So we see that this unity is vital for the people of God to grow up as the very representation of Christ in the earth. It is that oneness in Him that causes us to be one with each other. That in itself allows us the uniqueness in the Body of Christ, while being unified under His Lordship. So as we continue this thought, I believe there are very critical areas that call us to this place of common union.

There is a Roman military term that was taken by newly enlisted soldiers, which designated their oath of absolute devotion and obedience to his General, Sacraments. This term was adopted by the Church to reflect Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, or Communion. Jesus Himself instituted these as illustrations of His Grace and Mercy. One man said that, “these are meant to be channels of His unseen, but very real grace to us.” Another man said that “these Sacraments are like a kiss or a handshake that conveys friendship and love.” The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide To Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life.

There are many things that seem to divide us as Believers because we tend to focus on what we disagree on rather than what we agree on. Those non-negotiable beliefs of truth that hold us together as His Body and representatives in this world: it was these truths that caused the early Church to stand in the face of persecution and see the Gospel

declared with faith and power. The New Testament Church was unified concerning their common fellowship of the affective work of the Cross—through the body and blood of Jesus; and their identity through baptism into this Christ life, where the old man died and now the new man lives for the purposes of ‘Christ in me, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).

*“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. ⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. ⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.” **Ephesians 4:3-6 (NLT)***

Even The Apostles Creed, though it was not written by the Apostles, was a reflection of a unified Theological formulation of the First Century Church’s belief that signified the core values of the Church: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. AMEN.*

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So with these in mind, we must come to the realization that we can come together on these truths and stand together under the banner of the Body and Blood of Jesus, and displaying that we have died to our old selves, and have been resurrected in Christ a new. Declaring our absolute devotion and obedience to our God and surrendering our lives to the unity of Holy Spirit, to fulfill the Great Commission.

Methods are not Holy but the Message is

Too often we have tried to unify around different methods of ministry

and worship, however, we typically come up empty when those methods seem outdated or ineffective. Look at worship for a moment. We don't know what the Early Church method of worship looked like completely, but we do have snapshots of certain things: singing and praying the Psalms; singing hymns; public reading of the Torah and the Prophets; encouraging testimonies; gifts of The Spirit in operation; preaching of The Word; Calls of Repentance; Communion; and Public Baptisms. But as to the style, length, and manner, God never really revealed that to us. Why? I personally believe that He did not want us to get distracted with trying to reproduce a method, but wanted to remain focused and unified on the preaching and worship of the crucified Christ who has risen victoriously! That we are to know Him and make Him known!

So again, these unifying Sacraments: Communion represents what HE did for us. (*Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34*); Baptism represents what HE did in us (; and Spirit Baptism represents Who is in us and what HE does through us.

Now I want us to look at three different aspects of unity; the purpose of unity; the power of unity; and the phenomenon of unity.

The Purpose of Unity

As I said earlier, God given Unity requires Conformity: not to men, but to Him! The word purpose has to do with reason, principle, point, and function. So the purpose of unity is Holy Spirit bringing His Church together with the same mind and love of Christ. Making us one in Him to fulfill His purposes in the earth.

Jesus said that, "*...if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*" **Mark 3:25 (NKJV)**

"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. 11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is

*this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas (Peter)"; still another, "I follow Christ." 13 **Is Christ divided?** Was Paul **crucified** for you? Were you **baptized** into the name of Paul? 14 I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." **I Corinthians 1:10-17 NIV***

One man said, "When the unity of the Spirit is not in operation in the life of the Church, it affects our personal walk with God; It steals our joy; It impacts the Cooperate Church from growing spiritually and numerically; It strips the Church's testimony within the community; It robs the Church's ability to Reveal Christ!"

*"How good and **pleasant** it is when brothers live together in unity! 2 It is like **precious oil** poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, (Anointed to the priesthood) down upon the collar of his robes. 3 It is as if the **dew** of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his **blessing, even life forevermore.**" **Psalms 133 NIV***

The word *Pleasant* here is a Hebrew musical synonym for harmony. *And* the words *Live or Dwell* means residency and continuation; it is not an occasional occupation. This is a picture of enjoyment and harmony; peace and anointing; provision and growth; blessing and life! What a picture of what unity produces in the life of the People of God. It is such an expression of the blessing of God on the life of His people...the harmony; the sound of unity brings a symphony of beauty that it enjoyed not only by those who release it, but by all who hear it! This spiritual union not only releases a sound to the heart of God, but it releases a sound in the earth! This place of Spirit empowered unity is a place of life and strength!

Satan desires to defy and destroy such a sound of unity. He utilizes seeds of insecurity, jealousy, slander and gossip. He tries to tap into insecurity, unforgiveness and selfishness to break the chords of unity.

Yet is Holy Spirit that tunes us into the very standard of the Character and Nature of Father so we can release the sound of Heaven in every fabric of our lives and those around us. I just want to challenge us all to live in such a way that we can rally at the foot of the Cross so we, and with the sound of unity, release such a sound of harmony with heart of God, that the world recognizes we are HIS!

The Position of Unity

We live in a day when ‘everything that can be shaken is being shaken’.

“...He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." ²⁷ Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.”
Hebrews 12:26-29 (NKJV)

This is a day when World Economies are being shaken, Families are being attacked, Marriage is being Re-Defined; Fear is gripping hearts; These are days that HIS Church must answer the Prayer of Jesus! We must be One with Him and One with each other. These are not days for infighting with one another; these are days to rise up and ‘fight the fight of faith’; standing together under the banner of truth; positioned as harvesters in the field. I read a statement recently that truly expresses what happens when there is division in the Church; *“When the Church is divided, the entire community suffers spiritually, the Lost stay lost, the Hurt stay hurt, and the Broken remain in pieces.”* (Author unknown)

Division is like a cancer. It spreads throughout the whole body and causes the body to become so anemic that it steals the ability to function in a healthy way. That’s why we are to *“make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”* Ephesians 4:3. It is **our responsibility** as leadership to **safeguard** and **protect** the unity of the Spirit! The words *keep* or *guard* means to protect, maintain, and cherish.

To *guard* from loss or *injury*, properly by keeping *the eye* upon; to *prevent* escaping. Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary. This unity of the Spirit that we are responsible to protect is in direct relationship with the 'bond of peace', which is Christ Himself; He is our peace! We are empowered to live in harmony with one another when we are in harmony with Him!

The Power of Unity

Unity establishes the atmosphere in which Holy Spirit opens His floodgates and pours Himself out.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Acts 2:1-4

The phrase '*one accord*' means with one mind, with one accord, with one passion. "It's a unique Greek word, used 10 of its 12 New Testament occurrences in the Book of Acts, helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. *Homothumadon* is a compound of two words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonies in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church." <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/homothumadon.html>

What a picture of the symphony of God through the lives of His sons and daughters. The Day of Pentecost, the day of the empowering of the Church; the day when the Comforter, the Counselor, the Teacher, the Spirit of God Himself! He was also coming to be the Conductor to orchestrate the sound of Heaven into the hearts of men. The sound of unity below, released the sound of Heaven above. This harmonious sound would not just be heard within the confines of an upper room, but it would be heard throughout the entire city of Jerusalem and ultimately

to the whole world! Again, unity establishes the atmosphere in which Holy Spirit opens His floodgates and pours Himself out.

What was happening during the 10 days of waiting? I believe there were many moments of repentance and forgiveness; confessions of jealousy and envy; of bitterness and offense; of agendas and self-centered desires. So when the Day of Pentecost came, 120 followers of Christ had tuned their lives to the Heart of God and it released a beautiful, unified cry for Holy Spirit to come!

A.W. Tozer, in his book *The Pursuit of God*, said, “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.”

What would happen if we unified our hearts together again for Holy Spirit to give us a fresh outpouring again? A unified cry for His Presence, His Purpose, and His Power to consume His People again! The early Church turned the world upside down with that kind of harmony! They went from house to house, town to town, nation to nation; They “...*had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*” **Acts 9:31 (NKJV)** Do you see the power of the unity of the Spirit? Under His orchestration, under His Leadership, under His unveiling of Jesus: we will fulfill the Great Commission with signs and wonders, and see the love of God released through a unified Church! Oh, we must have Him!

What is so interesting is that the first 14 Chapters of Acts you see the terms ‘They & Them’. Yet after chapter 14 you begin to see the terms

'we & us'. Why? Because I believe that the more the Church walks together in the unity of the Spirit, the more we see each other not as separate entities, but as ONE! ONE Prayer, ONE Purpose, ONE Power...ALL by ONE SPIRIT!

The Phenomenon of Unity - The s3 - r3 Moment

The word Phenomenon has to do with occurrence, something observable, experience, happening or trend. When God's people come together, things happen; it can be observed and experienced by others. Jesus told 500 men and women, "*Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*" (Luke 24:49) What has always intrigued me is that only 120 responded. Where were the other 380? Why did they feel they didn't need to be there? To our knowledge, we have no observable facts that the 380 ever accomplished anything. Now I would hope that after the Day of Pentecost those that missed it came back and joined in; but we just don't know. But what we do know is that the 120 were not just a number, they were individuals that were willing to be numbered in a group that for the most, we would never know their names, their occupations, their families, nor their personal achievements. Yet, through their willingness to be unified by Holy Spirit, they changed the world!

In Hebrews 11, we catch a glimpse of the Hall of Faith. Those who believed God and experienced His miraculous power; however, there are a number of 'no named' people spoken of that to some would feel they didn't have a successful faith: "*...But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection.* ³⁶ *Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons.* ³⁷ *Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated.* ³⁸ *They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.* ³⁹ *All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised.* ⁴⁰ *For God had*

something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.” Hebrews 11:35-40 (NLT)

Verse 40 in the Message Translation says, *“God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.”* I want to bring this out to show that no matter where our faith takes us in this life, God has connected His family’s faith to not only accomplish something greater together than apart; but it also has His eternal stamp attached to it that will cause us to ‘rule and reign with Him’ throughout all eternity! It is an eternal plan; an eternal faith; an eternal unity that causes us to come together. That entails again that, “we can do more together than we could ever dream of doing a part”!

Another reason I use this word phenomenon with unity is because of what is happening with the relationship of S3 and R3. This relationship that is being built between key ministries in China and America is truly a phenomenon.

I have been amazed at the same core values of vision; of which become the glue that binds us together; that each ministry possesses. Core values based on a desire to see the Church unified for the common purpose of seeing the lost come to Christ, the hurting healed, the orphan cared for, the widow loved, and the people of God equipped for the work of the Ministry.

The vision of S3: Scripture, Spirit, and Saints. The vision of R3: Relationship, Resource, and Reformation. As Pastor Jian and I have been developing this friendship, it has truly been amazing to our hearts being knit together by Holy Spirit. As I began looking at the significant similarities of our assignments, I was overwhelmed with the fact that God was making eternal connections from the East to the West.

Scripture – Scripture becomes our basis for Relationship. Jesus, the Living Word, is our very foundation in which all Kingdom relationship are built. Everything Jesus did was out of love of His Father and to bring us into relationship with Him so we could build relationship with each other. Within R3 we would actually express it like this: To love the

Father Jesus lived for. It is our desire to live our lives out of complete abandonment to His Word and absolute surrender in worship.

Spirit – Holy Spirit is here to empower and equip us to be the Church that *“the gates of hell will never overcome”*(Matthew 16:18). He is our Teacher within the classroom of the Church for us to learn and grow together. In R3 we refer to this value of vision as Resource. Holy Spirit is our Resource for *“everything we need that pertains to life and godliness”* (2 Peter 1:3). We also believe that as we come together as His Church, Holy Spirit has placed different gifts and callings within His Body that bring what is needed for the moment. We would also express it like this; to love the Church Jesus paid for. Jesus purchased our freedom so we could become be free to serve Him. We as the Church get to grow and flow together. It is with that knowledge that we realize that as we grow in our relationship with Holy Spirit, we grow in our love and relationship with one another. Jesus said, *“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”* John 13:35 (NLT)

Saints – The Saints of God coming together, praying together, serving together, believing together for an outpouring of revival and harvest. In R3 we refer to this as Reformation. The word reformation means restoration, which is God restoring His Life to broken humanity. The heart here is for the coming together of men and women of like hearts, to live out the Great Commission. We would also express; to love the world Jesus died for. *“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”* **John 3:16-17 (NLT)** We have a heart to stand with the Church of China to see a great revival! We cry out in prayer together with the Psalmist over China and America: *“Will You not revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You? ⁷ Show us Your mercy, LORD, And grant us Your salvation.”* **Psalm 85:6-7 (NKJV)**

We also declare over you:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon you, for the LORD has anointed you to bring good news to the poor. He has sent you to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. ² He has sent you to tell those who mourn that the

*time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. ³ To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In righteousness, you will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory. ⁴ You will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago. You will revive them, though they have been deserted for many generations." **Isaiah 61:1-4 (NLT)***

The Power of Unity – We can do more together than we could ever dream of doing apart!

*“How good and **pleasant** it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like **precious oil** poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, (Anointed to the priesthood) down upon the collar of his robes...For there the Lord bestows his **blessing, even life forevermore.**” **Psalm 133:1-3 NIV***