

## Does Unity really exist in Diversity? – part 2

**Reading: Ephesians 4:11-13** “...till we all come to the unity of the faith...”

- - - This lesson is a continuation from Part 1 of the same lesson title - - - -

### **Introduction:**

In part 1 of this topic, we looked at the areas where diversity can exist within the church. Some diversity – *i.e.* Christians with different backgrounds and cultures - is a consequence of teaching the gospel to all the nations. Another area of diversity – people’s talents and abilities – is good for the church, as many various works need to be done within the body in order for it to be edified.

But we also saw that there are other areas of diversity that are wrong;

- Diverse teachings, doctrines and practices that are not in accord with the one Truth, and,
- People aligning themselves with a diverse range of church leaders, instead of aligning themselves with Christ.

In this lesson, part 2, we will look at Unity, and what role diversity has to play in it.

## **LESSON**

### **3) Union verses Unity**

a) There is a difference between Unity and Union

Firstly, we need to understand that there is a difference between “unity” and “union”.

- A “union” is a joining together; a linking, between two or more entities. But the fact that the separate entities may be joined together does not necessarily mean that they have unity. For example, you could have a dog and a cat chained together to form a “union”, but under normal circumstances, there would not be unity between them (other than a common desire to be freed).
- “Unity” is a “one-ness” – having the same aspirations and goals, and a working together to achieve those goals. This idea is shown in **1 Corinthians 1:10** where the apostle Paul, speaking to a congregation troubled by division, said, “*Now I plead with you, brethren,...that you all speak the same thing....that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.*”<sup>1</sup> In other words,
  - what they taught and said about doctrinal matters was to be the same thing,
  - their attitudes, thought and reasoning processes were to be the same, and,
  - they were to come to the same conclusions (judgements) about these matters.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is also possible for a group of people to have unity with each other, but not be in unity with God – **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Revelation 3:17.**

## Does Unity really exist in Diversity? – part 2

The best example of unity is that of Jesus and the Father.

### b) The unity of Jesus and the Father

Shortly before His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for the “oneness” (or unity) of all believers (**John 17:20-23**). And He gave us a benchmark for this unity – “...*as You, Father, are in Me (Jesus), and I (Jesus) in You...*” (vs.21). In other words, all believers are to have the same sort of unity with God and with each other as that which existed (and exists) between Jesus and the Father.

So then, in order for us to understand what this type of unity means for us, we need to look and see how the unity between Jesus and the Father manifested itself.

- In both the Father and Jesus is found Truth and Righteousness  
Both Jesus and the Father represent truth and righteousness. In **1 John 1:5**, we read that “...*God is light and in Him is no darkness<sup>2</sup> at all...*”. God the Father is holy (**John 17:11**) – there is no sin in Him.  
God is the God of Truth and Righteousness – **Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 65:16; John 17:25**.  
Jesus is Truth – **John 1:14; 14:6**  
Jesus is Righteous – **1 John 2:1**  
Jesus was without sin – **Hebrews 4:15**
- Jesus did the Father’s Will, in spite of the cost.  
When two “wills” differ, there is always the potential for conflict. But Jesus put His own will aside in order to do the Father’s will. When He came to earth, He gave up the power and position that He had with the Father (**John 1:1-2, 14; Philippians 2:6-8**). When He was here on earth, there was only “one will” being carried out – the Father’s Will. This is clearly seen by His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane – “*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done.*” (**Luke 22:42**).
- Both Jesus and the Father love us with a sacrificial love  
God’s love for Man is longsuffering, not wishing for any to perish (**2 Peter 3:9**). In fact, the Father loves us so much that He was prepared to sacrifice His own Son so that we could have eternal life (**John 3:16; Romans 5:8**).  
Jesus loves us so much that He laid down His life for us (**John 15:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**).
- Jesus did as the Father commanded Him  
When Jesus was here on earth, He did the things that the Father asked Him to do and say<sup>3</sup>. The works that He did were the works that the Father had given Him (**John 5:36**). What He taught were the things the Father commanded Him to

---

<sup>2</sup> “Darkness” is often equated to sin and evil – **John 3:19**

<sup>3</sup> This is in keeping with His desire to do the Father’s Will, not His own.

## Does Unity really exist in Diversity? – part 2

speak. In **John 12:49** we read; “*For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave me a command, what I should say, and what I should speak.*” There was no separate doctrine. There was no separate “interpretation”. The words that came from His mouth were the same as if the Father Himself were here speaking.

Jesus and the Father had different roles to play in the scheme of redemption. But they worked in unity. They worked together to fulfil the one eternal plan (**Ephesians 1:4**); to achieve the one, common outcome - to save the lost (**Luke 19:10**). They have the same love for man and the same desire to save man from his sins. They were both prepared to suffer loss in order for man to have salvation. And they both had the same message for man to follow.

The unity between the Father and Jesus was so complete, so perfect, that seeing one was the same as seeing the other. Jesus said, “...*He who has seen Me has seen the Father....*” (**John 14:9**). They were identical in nature. Paul said in **Colossians 1:15** says that “...*He is the image of the invisible God...*”, i.e. He was the tangible representation of God the Father Himself<sup>4</sup>.

### c) The lesson for us from Jesus’ unity with the Father

Based on what Jesus prayed for in **John 17:21**, this is the type of unity that we are to strive for. Just as Jesus and the Father are one, so we are to be one with them and each other. That means that our lives need to be like that of Jesus;

- We need to pursue Truth and Righteousness (**1 Corinthians 15:34; 3 John 4**).
- We need to seek to do the Father’s Will, not our own (**Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1-2**).
- We need to have a long-suffering, sacrificial love for one another (**1 Corinthians 13:4**).
- We each need to do our share of the Lord’s work in the body, according to our abilities (**Ephesians 2:10; 4:16**).
- We need to teach and preach the Truth as found in God’s Word, not some variation of the Truth or some other doctrine (**2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2**).
- And we need to be endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (**Ephesians 4:3**).

When we first and foremost strive to be right with God, we will have unity and fellowship with Him and with each other (**1 John 1:7**).

## 4) What role does Diversity have with regard to Unity?

Unity in diversity is only possible when all of the diverse parts are working together in unison to achieve a common purpose. If they are off “doing their

---

<sup>4</sup> See also **Hebrews 1:3** “...*the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...*”, and **Matthew 1:23** “...*they shall call His name Immanuel.....God with us...*”

## Does Unity really exist in Diversity? – part 2

own thing”, then you don’t have real unity – you may have a union, but you won’t have unity.

We saw in part 1 of this lesson that Paul used the example of the body (in **1 Corinthians 12**) to show that the church<sup>5</sup> consists of members who have different roles, talents and abilities. But all have a role to play. In the physical body, the hand and the eye are completely different parts and have different functions. But when they work together in order for the body to perform a task, then they are working in unison; they are working in unity. For example, if a person wants to hammer a nail, the eye works with the hand (which is holding the hammer) to guide it to the correct place. But if the eye wants to “wander off elsewhere”, or the hand wants to operate without the help of the eye, then there is no unity, and the chances are that the hammer won’t hit the nail.

This same approach applies to the Lord’s church. There are many different tasks to be done in the church, and if we are all working together to teach (**1 Timothy 4:11**), to exhort (**Hebrews 3:13**), to comfort (**1 Thessalonians 4:18**), to minister (**Colossians 1:7**), to help (**Acts 18:27**), to love (**1 Peter 1:22**), to rebuke (**2 Timothy 4:2**), to forgive (**Ephesians 4:32**), to worship (**John 4:24**), to edify (**Romans 14:19**) the body in accord with God’s truth, then yes, you do have unity through diversity.

### **Conclusion**

So then, back to the questions mentioned in the introduction of this lesson (in part 1). Does the Bible teach that we can have diversity in the church, and at the same time have true unity? The Biblical answer is that in some ways, “Yes”, but in other ways, “No”.

- When the diverse parts are working in unity to edify the body (**Ephesians 4:16**); are all walking according to God’s Word (**Ephesians 5:8-10**); and are staying on the “...*narrow way*...” (**Matthew 7:13-14**), then there is unity (**1 John 1:7**).
- However, if the diverse parts claim to be seeking the same common outcome, but are following different doctrines (**1 Timothy 1:3**), engage in un-authorized<sup>6</sup> religious practices (**Acts 15:24**), and/or promote multiple faiths (**Ephesians 4:5**), then there is no true, Biblical unity. All you have is diversity.

---

<sup>5</sup> The church is also called “*the body*” – **Ephesians 1:22-23**; **Colossians 1:18**

<sup>6</sup> Unauthorised from a perspective of God’s Word.