

First published in Loveland Reporter-Herald 7/29/2026

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Unity or Illusion: Where Do You Stand?

In a culture increasingly driven by approval, many people quietly measure their lives by how well they fit in. Social acceptance has become a kind of currency. We adjust our views, soften our convictions, and curate our identities to avoid standing out too sharply. The pressure is subtle, but constant.

The Christian life was never meant to be shaped by the fear of others' opinions. The Apostle Paul writes, "We instructed you how to live in order to please God... now we ask you and urge you... to do this more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1–2). That single directive—live to please God—cuts against the grain of a culture built on pleasing everyone else.

Paul reinforces this even more directly elsewhere: "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?" (Galatians 1:10). It is a question that exposes a fundamental tension. One cannot consistently live for both.

But living to please God requires more than personal sincerity. It demands clarity and unity around what truly matters. Without that, even well-intentioned faith becomes diluted, fragmented, and ultimately ineffective.

Unity is often misunderstood. It is not uniformity, nor is it a carefully managed appearance of agreement. True unity is rooted in shared essentials—convictions that define both belief and practice. Without agreement on those essentials, trust erodes, and the mission loses coherence.

For Christians, those essentials are not abstract ideals. They are grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ. At the center is the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of humanity, whose death and resurrection make reconciliation with God possible. This is not one belief among many; it is the foundation upon which all others stand.

Flowing from this is a shared commitment to the authority of Scripture as God's Word, the call to repentance and transformed living, and the command to love—both God and neighbor. These are not optional features of the Christian life; they are its defining marks.

And yet, this is where the tension becomes visible. Christianity today is expressed across a wide range of denominations and perspectives. Diversity can be a strength, but only if it does not come at the expense of the core. When secondary differences overshadow primary truths, unity fractures, and the witness of the Church becomes blurred.

Jesus himself made clear what would distinguish his followers: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). This love is not sentimental or selective. It is rooted in truth, shaped by Scripture, and expressed in both conviction and compassion. It reflects a life oriented not toward self-preservation or social approval, but toward faithfulness to God.

This kind of life will look different. It will not always align with cultural expectations, and it may invite misunderstanding. But it carries something the world cannot manufacture—integrity anchored in truth and expressed through genuine love.

The alternative is a faith that adapts so readily to its surroundings that it loses its distinctiveness altogether. A divided or compromised Christianity offers little clarity and even less hope. If everything is negotiable, then nothing is truly worth holding onto.

Living to please God, as Paul describes, is not about rigid perfection or performance. It is about direction—orienting one’s life toward what is true and lasting. It is about gratitude expressed through obedience, not fear disguised as conformity.

In the end, unity in essentials is not a theological luxury; it is a practical necessity. It shapes how Christians live, how they relate to one another, and how they are seen by the world around them.

A faith built on shifting ground cannot stand. A witness divided against itself cannot persuade. But a people united in truth—living not for approval, but out of gratitude to God—becomes something unmistakable.

Not perfect, but clear. Not loud, but compelling.

And that is precisely Paul’s call: not simply to believe, but to “live in order to please God... more and more.” In a world that rewards conformity, that kind of life does not just stand apart—it points the way forward.