

Defining the “I” In U-N-I-T-Y  
*“Unity of the Church”*

**John 17:20-23**

“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.”

**A. Working definition of UNITY- A State of being ONE**

**B. Class exercise –**

- Use one word starting with the letters in the word UNITY to ascribe your own meaning
- Use that word in a sentence.

**Lesson Objectives**

1. Observing how is Unity embedded in the Godhead.
2. Identify how Christian Unity matters to God.
3. Understanding that the Church cannot please God if there is disunity.
4. Recognizing the barriers to a Unified Congregation

**C. Unity of the Godhead.**

The concept of unity in the Godhead is a core principle of Christian faith. It emphasizes the oneness and singularity of God while acknowledging the distinct manifestation of the God feature. The Godhead is not a harmonious agreement, like neighbors living together, but an essential oneness in essence and nature.

“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:10-11). In other words, the flesh, or the Son of God, was not God. But the Spirit that indwelt the flesh was indeed God the Father. Therefore, Jesus was able to say, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

God’s oneness, therefore, is firmly established as the absolute doctrine of the Old Testament. Jehovah, as He is known in the Old Testament, and possesses every attribute and office of deity and scriptures prove the Godhead in the New Testament as well.

## Old Testament Scriptures

He is omnipresent (I Kings 8:27).  
He is omnipotent (Jeremiah 32:17).  
He is omniscient (Psalm 147:5).  
He is self-existent (Exodus 3:14).  
He is the pardoner of sins (Psalm 78:38).  
He is absolute in truth (Psalm 33:4).  
He is the giver and source of life (Isaiah 44:24).  
He is the seat of authority (Psalm 119:89).  
He is the Creator (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 45:12).  
He is the King (Isaiah 44:6).  
He is the Savior (Isaiah 45:21).  
He is the Redeemer (Psalm 130:8).  
He is the Judge (Psalm 50:6).

## New Testament Scriptures

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He is omnipresent (Matthew 18:20).  
He is omnipotent (Matthew 28:18).  
He is omniscient (John 2:24-25).  
He is self-existent (John 8:58).  
He is the pardoner of sins (Matthew 9:2).  
He is absolute in truth (John 14:6).  
He is the giver and source of life (John 11:25).  
He is the seat of authority (Matthew 5:18).  
He is the Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16).  
He is the King (I Timothy 6:15).  
He is the Savior (Matthew 1:21).  
He is the Redeemer (Titus 2:14).  
He is the Judge (Acts 17:31)

That is why Timothy Wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16

### **D. How is Christian Unity Important to God**

- a. It is emphasized by Jesus in Jn.17:20-23.
- b. It is exhorted by Paul in Eph.4:3-6 “
- c. The Apostle Paul rebukes the Corinthian church for its lack of unity. I Cor.1-2.
- d. Peter reminds us in I Pet.2:9
- e. The “**body of Christ**”  
.Eph.2:19-22; 5:31; Col.1:13-23; I Cor.12:12-13; I Pet.2:5;

D.(1)

#### **Four different concepts of unity:**

- a. **Spiritual unity** - The universal church is unified by a common Spirit and gospel. The exemplary unifying spiritual experience is recorded in Act 2
- b. **Relational unity** - Mutual recognition and fellowship between Christian groups.
- c. **Task unity** – The church unites in a common task or ministry.
- d. **Organizational unity** - Denominational identity is an example of this kind of unity.

D (2)

The church is in agreement with respect to the basic tenants of the faith as it has come down through history **and has** doctrinal, ethical, and organizational boundaries that are defended.

#### **Documentation Pursuant to Unification.**

- a. The Apostles Creed
- b. Church manual
- c. Bylaws
- d. Joint Declarations
- e. Ecumenical Scripts

The Original **Apostolic** Leader emphasizes the oneness of the Church under the following unifying practices:

1. The proper ministry of the **Word** (Preaching and teaching) and practice a life in Christ (**Eph.2:20** “having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone.” Eph.4:10-16; 32; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:1)
2. Gathering – for worship, ministry, and body life. (Acts 2:42)
3. Scattering – for spreading the message of hope to the world. (Acts 8).
4. The proper administration of the **Sacraments**. Baptizes in water and serves the Lord’s Supper. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:19; St. John 3:22)  
The proper exercise of church **discipline**. The true church has moral and doctrinal boundaries that are defended. St. Matthew 18:15-200

#### **B. What is Christian unity? Rom.15:1-7**

“<sup>1</sup> Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not {just} please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me. <sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to **be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus**; <sup>6</sup> that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”

#### **NOT UNITY OF OPINION OR PERSPECTIVE ON ISSUES,**

There will be a diversity of motivations, ministries, and manifestations or results in the church. There will be people at various stages of growth and understanding in the church. Therefore, unionized opinions or perspective on issues are not foundational unifying factors...

#### **UNITY OF RELATIONSHIP.**

Christian unity is a common spirit that networks individuals with differing gifts, temperaments, levels of maturity and cultural backgrounds.

It is a gracious commitment of love that transcends cultural and growth differences.  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian 12:4-12

*There is no conflict of purpose or origin with various gifts but there will be a difference in ministry, effect, and passion. Each person will have a distinct function that is needed to build up the one common church. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor.12:21*

#### **C. Allow your brother the freedom to determine his own convictions — even when they differ from yours.**

1. The principle of **acceptance** — unity and the edification of others are to take precedence over my rights.
2. The principle of **accountability** — subjection to the wisdom and weakness of others is necessary for my growth.
3. The principle of **constructive critique** – There are two types of critics.
  - a. Those who want us to fail. We are foolish to take their critique too seriously.
  - b. Those who want us to succeed. We are foolish not to listen to them.

#### **D. Caring for Each Other . Rom.14:13-15:2**

##### **1. Do Not . . .**

- a. Put a stumbling block in his way (14:13)
- b. Destroy with food ((14:15)
- c. Let your good thing become evil (14:16)
- d. Tear down God's work (14:20)
- e. Give offense (14:20)
- f. Cause a brother to stumble (14:21)
- g. Just please yourself (15:1)

##### **2. Do . . .**

- a. Walk according to love (14:15)
- b. Serve Christ (14:18)
- c. Pursue peace (14:19)
- d. Build up one another (14:19)
- e. Bear the weaknesses of the weak (15:1)
- f. Please your neighbor for his good (15:2)
- g. Edify the Weaker Brother (15:2)

##### **3. Avoid Pharisee – WHO is this? known for their strict interpretation and observance of the Torah (written law) and oral traditions, emphasizing personal piety, resurrection, and an afterlife,**

- a. Beware of becoming a Pharisee (Matt.16:12; Lk.12:1; Rom.14:3). Basically, a Pharisee is one who fails to distinguish between divine principle or command and personal application. He absolutizes the application — not just for himself, but for everyone else as well.
- b. When questioned by a Pharisee, graciously explain the reasons for your convictions (Col.4:6; II Tim.2:24-25; I Pet.3:14-16).
- c. Don't capitulate to his pressure to conform to his absolutes (Col.2:8, 16-23), especially on matters of gospel principle (Gal.2:3-5).
- d. Pursue peace (Rom.12:18; 14:19). Your goal is to build him up. If he rejects your efforts to establish harmony, leave him alone and commit him to God (Matt.15:12-14).
- e. Admonish everyone in the church to beware of the dangers of Pharisaism (Rom.15:14). Instruct and exhort the Pharisee openly before the congregation of believers.
- f. When the Pharisee begins to cause spiritual damage to others, the church, and/or the reputation of the Lord, confront him privately and seek to help him change his course (Matt.18:15; Gal.6:1; I Thess.5:14; II Thess.3:14-15).
- g. If private reproof does not restore the brother, then the steps that Christ spelled out for church discipline are called for (Matt.18:15-20). The final step of excommunication is equivalent to Christ's public rebuke of those who so vigorously opposed Him (Matt.23).

## E. What are the limits of unity?

### 1. Situations that require church discipline

#### a. DOCTRINAL

1. “One who preaches a false gospel” Gal.1:6-9
2. “One who goes beyond the gospel” II Jn.7-11
3. “Blasphemy” (speaking with gross disrespect of God) I Tim.1:19-20 (II Tim.2:17; 4:14)

#### b. BEHAVIORAL

1. “Free-loader” II Thess.3:6,11,14-15
2. “Open immorality” I Cor.5:11
3. “Divisiveness” Rom.16:17

### 2. Jesus' teaching — Matt. 18:15-17

### 3. The proper motive

- a. Love for the offenders — Heb.12:8-13
- b. Love for the church — I Cor.5:1-13

### 4. Unauthorized judgment by believers against one another is forbidden. Luke 6:37

- a. We will be held accountable to our own We are not to judge the motives of others. I Cor.4:5; Jas.4:11
- b. We are to be especially patient with young believers. Rom.14:1

## Summary - Ephesians 4:1-16

1. Unity is a Christian priority.
2. Unity is a mark of maturity.
3. Unity is a human impossibility.
4. Unity is grounded in Christian identity.
5. Unity is not the enemy of diversity.
6. Unity must be built diligently.
7. Unity is everyone's responsibility.
8. Unity is forged by truth-telling in love and humility

