

# The Unity of the Body of Christ

by Denny Kenaston

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity in the body of Christ, and how we can achieve it through our calling, attitudes, and the Spirit's influence.*

**Duration:** 1:19:06

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12

**Topics:** "Body Of Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of unity in the body of Christ. He begins by discussing the difference between knowing the fact of unity and experiencing the reality of unity. The preacher then delves into Ephesians chapter four, starting with verse one, where the Apostle Paul introduces himself as a prisoner of the Lord. The sermon emphasizes the importance of true unity in the body of Christ and how it can lead to a beautiful and mature functioning body.

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## Transcript

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Lord, we find our heart in the words of this song this morning.

Thank you, Father. Thank you for giving us such beautiful, rich songs, Lord, that we can find the depths of our heart crying out to you in the very song. Lord, from the end of the earth, in Pennsylvania, we cry to you this morning, Lord.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Have mercy upon us and make thy face to shine upon us, Lord, that thy saving health might be known among all the nations of the world. In Jesus Christ's name I ask it.

Amen. You may be seated. I was looking for that, I guess it's not here anymore, that little tin cup with a little change in it.

Remember that? That's how I feel this morning, so I was looking for the cup. Last Sunday morning, I was in Wyoming, and a young man had the opening there, 19 years old. And he got up behind the pulpit, and he just kind of stood there, trembling.

And he reached for his papers, you know, and it's like this. He tried to open his mouth and talk, and he just started to cry. And I looked at him, and I said, Thank you, Lord, for the reminder.

Though I've been standing up for 30 years, may I never get away from how that young man feels who stood up this morning. It always blesses me to see the young or the inexperienced stand up behind this pulpit. It will make you tremble, amen? It will make you tremble.

But I want you to know, it's not just the young and the inexperienced who tremble. So I greet you in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus Christ, this morning, God bless you, everyone, for coming.

It's a joy to have you here, worshiping with us. The Lord has led me to bring a message this morning that he dropped on me last Sunday night in Wyoming. So, I didn't have much time to prepare it on Sunday night in Wyoming.

I had a half a page of notes. But I have taken time to pray and prepare it here this morning. The title of the message is True Unity in the Body of Christ.

True Unity in the Body of Christ. We're going to read just a few verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And then we're going to be in Ephesians chapter 4. I feel the Lord leading us to look at Ephesians chapter 4, just verse by verse.

Right down the line, I don't know, verse 1 through 16. But before we read these verses here in Corinthians, I just want to give you a little history. A little history lesson.

We're going to be reading out of the book of Ephesians. And that means we're talking about the church at Ephesus. And some of the instruction that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus.

I believe several years after he was there and the church was born. We can see the beautiful way that the church at Ephesus was born. By reading in Acts chapter 19.

It was glorious. It was beautiful. It was powerful.

It started with twelve men who were disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who had been baptized by the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance. And then Paul came and explained unto them the way of God more perfectly.

Or the way to come to God more perfectly. Or the way that God makes man righteous through our Lord Jesus Christ. They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul laid his hands upon them and they were all filled, baptized with the Holy Ghost that day. And began to speak with tongues as the Spirit of God gave them utterance. And from that day forward, a beautiful church began to spring up in Ephesus.

That's the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote in the epistle to the Ephesians. One of the most beautiful, the most heavenly, glorious, most maturing words that he wrote to any of the churches that he started.

And Ephesus became a mature body in Christ. History says, and I'd like to do some more history study on the church at Ephesus. But history tells us that at one time in Ephesus, in its glory, there were 100,000 church members in the city of Ephesus.

Now they didn't all meet in one place. Back in those days, there was only one church. There was 100,000 church members.

People who loved the Lord with all their heart in the city of Ephesus. And the church at Ephesus planted many, many churches. You can find six of them there in the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3. But that is the history of the church at Ephesus just briefly.

Now let's turn to 1 Corinthians and read. Chapter 12, verse 12 through 14. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Or, so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many. Drop down to verse 24. There's much we could read here in 1 Corinthians, but I don't want to be distracted from Ephesians this morning.

Read verse 24 through 27. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body, or balanced the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. Why? That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Paul uses the analogy of the human body here to illustrate what the church of Christ is supposed to be. Now I want to quickly clarify. There are two revelations of the church of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

One is the church local, that's what we are right here. And the other one is the church universal. We know that there is the church of Jesus Christ in China and many other places in the world.

And if you read in the book of Hebrews, you'll even find the church of the firstborn in heaven. But we're speaking here this morning because we are a church local. We're addressing the revelation of the church local in the New Testament.

And Paul uses the analogy of the human body to illustrate this unity and this beautiful functioning body called the Christ in the New Testament. Now my body is in true unity this morning. It is a fully functioning body.

All the members of my body function for the good of the whole. This head, that is my brain, can use this body to do thousands of different things. My body is functioning in unity.

Just last weekend we were ministering to a little boy out there in Wyoming who had brain surgery just a couple of days before. And he was taking radiation treatments in the area where he had a tumor in his brain. His body was not responding to all the impulses that his brain was sending it.

For a while he couldn't hear out of this ear. He was getting sick even though he had nothing in his stomach. Many things were not functioning right.

His head and his body was not in unity. But this morning, I am a unity. I am a human being functioning in a mature way.

I can run. I can jump. Maybe not as high as I used to, but I can still jump.

I can move my hands. I can read. And whatever I want to do up here, I can do.

Everything my body wants me to do, I can do. I am a unified body this morning. And Paul uses that as an illustration to grab the heart of the church at Ephesus and also the heart of the church at Corinthians to help them to see what God wants of them.

May we also learn from that this morning. My body is in true, mature unity. Now, Paul says to us here in Corinthians, Ye are the body of Christ.

And I would say that that is what God's goal is for us. The same thing, that we would be a mature body. All the messages from the head going down into actions in this body.

All the members of the body functioning for the good of the whole. And yea, this head, Jesus Christ, being able to use this body, charity Christian fellowship, in thousands of different ways. That's God's heart.

Now, let's look at a definition of the word unity here this morning. The word unity means to be joined together so as to form a single unit. To be joined together so as to form a single unit.

That's what unity is. There is no other definition for unity than that. To be joined together so as to form a single unit.

I believe it was Oswald Chambers who gave this definition of unity. I have it written in my Bible, but I didn't write who wrote it. So, if I'm wrong on that, forgive me.

But listen to his, and this is so much like Oswald Chambers, listen to this deep, profound comment on unity. He says, There is no possibility of oneness or unity except there be two or more. There must be separation and a willingness to come together or oneness means nothing.

That's a good definition, isn't it? There must be separation and a willingness to come together or oneness means nothing at all. Just a word up there. Unity is to be joined together so as to form a single unit.

Now, in the Scripture we have the fact of unity, and we also have the issues of the reality of unity, and many times the fact and the reality do not come together. That does not disannul the fact, but it only helps us to realize what God really wants. He wants the reality of unity in the body of Christ.

It's not enough for us to know the fact of unity, although that's greatly encouraging, but God is after the reality of unity in the body of Christ. And the result? A beautiful, mature, functioning body. Now, let's look at Ephesians chapter 4, and we're just going to start in verse 1, and go down through these verses.

Paul begins with a little bit of introduction of his own testimony of his own life. And I love that about Paul. He speaks out of his own life.

He speaks about where he's at. And he begins by saying, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord. And that's no little statement that he's making, and we could just easily say, oh, he's speaking about the fact that he's in Rome and he's in prison.

And it is true that he is in Rome and he's in prison. But I want you to notice that he didn't just say, I, therefore, the prisoner. He said, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord.

Now, that changes the whole thing. That changes what the cell looks like. That changes what reality is like.

That changes what his whole life is like. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord. And other places, Paul would have used the phrase, I, the bond slave of Jesus Christ.

And I believe that Paul, though yea, he may have been in a cell, looking through bars when he wrote this epistle, he was also the prisoner of the Lord in his heart, in reality, all the time. He was a bond slave of Jesus Christ. And he was one, not because he had to be, he was one who was so caught up and so captivated by the reality of who Christ was that he was a bond slave of Jesus Christ.

Delighting, joyously delighting in being Christ's slave. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beseech you, I beg you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Now, I'd like to focus here just for a minute on the word vocation.

The word vocation. And that leads me to the first point here. And that is the calling that promotes unity.

We're going to follow a little bit of an outline here. The calling that promotes unity. The attitudes that promote unity and all the way down through this text.

But I want us to notice the calling that promotes unity. Because when Paul is speaking about vocation, he's not speaking about the fact that you're a farmer, or that you're a mechanic, or that you're a housewife. He's talking about a higher vocation than that.

He's referencing back to chapter 1 and chapter 2 and chapter 3, where he brings out the revelation of the body of Jesus Christ. And, by the way, the apostle Paul is the apostle, the special messenger of the revelation of the body of Christ. Paul is that apostle.

The special messenger who revealed by revelation, by the spirit of revelation, that Jesus Christ, though now sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Father, has a body on this earth. Paul is the one who brought that revelation to the church. And we thank God for that apostle.

Amen? Who laid such beautiful foundations for us, that we can learn from. But Paul is saying to them, that we should walk worthy of this vocation, the fact, the calling, that we are the body of Christ. Now, I believe what Paul is saying there is, he's longing for the reality of that to settle down upon us.

See? Just like any other vocation settles down upon us. I am a mother. That is a vocation.

And when that vocation settles down upon you, sisters, it causes you to walk in such a way that you are a mother. I am a father. And when that vocation settles down upon us as fathers, it causes us to function in such a way that you can look upon us and say, there is a Father.

And Paul says, I beseech you, I beg you, that you walk worthy of the vocation for which you are called. That is the body of Christ. Now, ye are the body of Christ.

And members in particular. Paul's encouragement to us is that we have a calling that promotes unity. We are the body of Christ.

God has called us out of the world and together. We are the ecclesia, the called out and called together ones in Jesus Christ our Lord. This vocation requires us that we walk in such a way that brings proper honor to the body of Jesus Christ and Christ our head.

Let us walk worthy. This is who we are. How we are to walk worthy, this becomes a reality as we go down through these verses.

So that leads us to the second one. Attitudes that promote unity in verse 2 and 3. Paul goes on to say, Walk worthy with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So here we have attitudes that promote unity.

Since we are the body of Christ, let us have the attitudes in our midst, among ourselves, with ourselves, in all of our relationships, which promote a unifying of this body, a reality of this body of Christ that matches the fact of who we are. Seven beautiful attitudes we find here. The first one is the attitude of lowliness, which is just another way of saying humility.

In fact, if you look it up in the Vines Expository Dictionary, the two words are together. Lowliness. Humility.

See humility. You go to humility. Humility.

See lowliness. And God says, Oh, let's have in our midst, in our relationships, one with another, a heart attitude of humility, a lowliness of mind. More lowly-mindedness brings more like-mindedness.

Amen? More lowly-mindedness brings more like-mindedness in the body of Christ. And we need like-mindedness. The Scripture would also speak about being high-minded.

That's the opposite of lowly-minded. To be high-minded is to think, Oh, I'm something special, when in reality, no, I'm a needy man who needs the Lord Jesus Christ every minute of every day, or I'm not going to do it right. Amen? Oh, God help us to have that kind of a mind.

A mind that esteems others as more important than me. The second one is meekness. And that word meekness simply means a gentle yieldedness to God and to others.

Oh, isn't that beautiful when you look at it in the light of the body of Christ? A gentle yieldedness to God. Yes, God, whatever you want me to do, and to others, those that are around me. A gentle yieldedness to God and others.

And then he follows with that one the word long-suffering. And long-suffering simply means to suffer long. And I know it may be a little bit hard to grasp here this morning, because we're in the body of Christ and we have pretty high expectations about what we in the body of Christ are supposed to be.

But Paul is addressing this issue of our relationships one with another, and he tells us to suffer long. Now, if you're going to suffer long, that means you're going to suffer. And how can it be that I'm going to suffer in

the body of Christ? Because you're my brothers and my sisters.

But in reality, the truth of the matter is that we do suffer sometimes from one another. And Paul says, have the attitude in your heart that says, I'm willing to suffer long. Amen? And this attitude promotes true unity in the body of Christ.

The next word is the word forbearing. And it means to bear long. To bear long with.

And it speaks not necessarily of suffering as if some bad thing comes my way, but rather it has to do with us bearing with one another in all of our infirmities. And we are who we are. And I am who I am.

And we make mistakes. And we have different personalities. And God says to us, you are all part of the body of Jesus Christ.

Put up with one another. Put up with my infirmities. I'll put up with your infirmities.

I will bear long with the infirmities of my brothers and my sisters. That's what Paul says. Forbearing.

And then he finishes by saying, in love. And I looked at a definition the other day of love which I found to be greatly enlightening to me. And so I'll give it to you.

Love being filled with thoughts and actions of goodwill and kindness. To be filled with thoughts and actions of goodwill and kindness toward my brother and my sisters in the body of Christ. And the next word I'd like to note in this portion of Scripture is the word endeavoring to keep.

To keep. And that has to do with standing guard over the unity that we have. Endeavoring to keep.

The unity that the Spirit gives. And as I see this text, Paul is admonishing us that we all have a responsibility to endeavor to keep that unity. There is unity that comes from our lowly attitudes.

There is unity that comes from the doctrines that we believe. And we'll see more of that as we go down through here. But there is also unity that the Spirit of God gives.

God's Spirit is the most powerful influence of unity in the body of Christ. Brothers and sisters, the greatest thing that you could do for the unity of the body of Christ is to be filled continually and controlled continually with the Spirit of God. You come here on Sunday morning with grace flowing your life and heaven open over your heart and your life, you will be adding to the unity that the Spirit gives to the body of Christ.

And Paul says, let us walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. And that word keep means to stand guard. To stand guard.

Oh, I'm jealous over the spirit of unity that is in this local body. Unity. The unity that the Spirit gives this way and this way.

Because you cannot separate them. Amen? True spiritual fellowship flows this way and it flows this way. And if things are blocked this way, things are automatically blocked this way.

Endeavoring to keep the unity that the Spirit of God gives. And lastly is the word peace. That's the last attitude that promotes unity.

And it simply means at one with each other. That it speaks of harmonious relationships. Here Paul is encouraging us.

Ye are the body of Christ. You are Christ's body on the earth. Is there a strain in relationship? Is there a situation where you are not at one with your brother or your sister? The bond of peace is missing.

Where there is no at oneness between us, this is a great hindrance to the true unity of the body of Christ. Brothers and sisters, let us seek God that He might flow His grace into our hearts and our lives. That these attitudes may be in us through Christ Jesus.

Let's move on to the next one. Doctrines that promote unity. Verse 4-6 So we have a calling that promotes unity.

We have attitudes that promote unity. Now we have doctrines that promote unity. Verse 4-6 There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.

Now we are skimming each one of these doctrines this morning. Obviously we could spend a whole hour on each one of them. Doctrines that promote unity.

I thought about, as I was meditating on this little portion of Scripture, I thought about the early church. We are looking at seven oneness doctrines. And I thought about the early church and how it was in reality there in the book of Acts, where we can see so beautifully functioning a body of Christ that was in full unity.

Isn't it beautiful how it functioned? Can you see it there in the book of Acts? So one with the head, so much so that grace is flowing from the head down into the body. So one that the head gave commandments through the Spirit, as one says, to those that were there. Such a beautiful functioning body in the book of Acts.

Think how it must have been in these seven oneness doctrines. First one, ye are one body. Now we've already said that and said it and said it and the whole message is on this first point.

But I just want us to look at it and see. This is a doctrine in the Bible. And it is one that is meant by God to promote and encourage us to unity.

One body. Not two bodies. One.

I know that down through history, there have probably been many men who would have wished that there were two bodies. Because of their differences, their attitudes toward others, they wished there were two or three or four. But there's just one.

One body. Then he goes on to say one spirit. One spirit.

Not two. The Spirit of God is the all-inclusive Spirit of God, which allows God to be present everywhere at the same time. One spirit.

Not two. And we are all baptized by the same one and only Holy Spirit into that one body. That's a fact.

And brothers and sisters, when we allow those facts to settle down upon us, we realize this encourages and promotes the unity. Yes, we have the fact of unity. But it encourages and promotes us to move in the direction of the reality of unity.

Why? We are all baptized by one Spirit into Jesus Christ. Just one. Just one.

One hope. One hope of His calling. I thought about that.

The lively, energizing hope that all of us have. And it's the same, isn't it? We all have the same hope of the glory of God to come. We all have the same hope of the resurrection of our bodies.

We all have the same hope of Christ's return. And we all have the same hope of a home in heaven someday. That is unifying doctrine.

Isn't it? Oh, because all of this was in my heart as we sat and sang the songs this morning, so many of the songs we sang, I was just grabbing and seeing how, yes, that song, that one, that one is drawing the body together on this Sunday morning. And that's exactly how it's supposed to be. We sing the songs of our lively hope and it draws our hearts in unity and oneness together.

One Lord. One Lord? Yes, one Lord, Jesus Christ, seated in heaven. He has God made both Lord and Christ, the Anointed One.

And that one Lord is the head of this body this morning. We have one Lord, brother and sister. Not two, one.

Oh, to grasp the reality that Jesus is the head of this body and He loves to send forth grace, wisdom, impulses, impressions, direction down into all the members of this body. He longs to do that. And He does do it.

I'm not saying that He doesn't. He does. But oh, that we could become, in reality, one solid body.

Where all are receiving from the head into the body. One Lord. One faith.

That's the faith of true Christianity. That's the faith of the gospel that we believed in. You believed it.

You believed it. I believed it. Each one of us, we believed the same beautiful proclamation of the gospel.

And every one of us were born again by the Spirit of God. With one faith. One faith.

That draws us together. That promotes unity in our hearts. And one baptism.

One baptism. I thought about it this morning as I was preparing. If you're a believer, for the most part, as I look out over this crowd this morning, we all went to the baptismal waters, didn't we? One baptism.

Well, I don't know what Paul is saying. I don't know if he's talking about spirit baptism or physical baptism. You know, it seems like they were pretty close together in the book of Acts because of the persecutions.

But nevertheless, it is one baptism. And we all look back to that same experience of being born again. Of being washed in the blood.

And sealing our faith in holy baptism. That is a unifying doctrine, brothers and sisters. A doctrine that promotes unity in this body.

And lastly, there is one God and Father. One. One God, our Father.

One God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all have the same Father. We have all been adopted into the same family.

Who is above all. There is God and His sovereignty sitting on His throne. And through all, which means among you all.

And in you all. Isn't that beautiful? God has done all of that for us. Why? For us? No.

For the exaltation of His Son upon this earth. And we get some side benefits out of it. Fourthly, let's move ahead here.

We want to also notice the personal gifts that promote unity. Verse 7-10 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

Now, he that ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things. And this morning as we sit here, he is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, filling all things in this church.

Personal gifts that promote unity. Just like God tempers or balances our physical body, so that it will be well balanced, so that there will be no schisms within this body of ours, but everything is beautifully well balanced. It would look pretty odd if all of a sudden here this morning, this hand decided that it wasn't going to do what the other one did, and each time this hand went up, this hand went behind me.

You'd wonder what's wrong with him. Every time his left hand goes up, his right hand goes behind him. And you'd think there's something wrong here.

Something isn't right. And there are those poor souls who have diseased bodies that don't always function the way that they're supposed to. The body is not in balance.

But God has tempered this body so beautifully balanced that there's no schism or imbalances in the body. So also he places all kinds of different gifts in the body for the same reason. That the body might depend upon itself.

All of you have gifts. If you, sitting here this morning, have been born again by the Spirit of God, when you, by the Spirit, were baptized into Christ, Christ gave you gifts. I don't know what they are, but God knows exactly what he gave you, and God gave us different gifts, not the same gifts.

Imagine if everyone in this body had the same gift. Imagine if everyone had my gift. Wouldn't you get tired of hearing all the hollering? But it's not that way.

God gives different gifts to each and every one of us. Why? That the body might be balanced. That the body might be tempered.

That the body would need one another, and be encouraged by one another. God did that. God did it! And brothers and sisters, let me encourage you.

God gave you a gift. You have at least one. And God did not give it to you for you.

He gave it to you for us. It's our gift, not yours. So don't take it and hide it.

Don't go put it in a napkin and dig a hole and bury it. It's not your gift. It's our gift.

Just like it says in 1 Peter, I think it's chapter 4. As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, we are to offer our gifts. We are to exercise them in the body. Brothers and sisters, let us not be timid and unbelieving.

But yea, walk forward in faith and confidence. And when we sense God moving us, move! Whether it is to reach out to somebody who is hurting, or to come over and encourage one, or yea, even maybe to bring a quick rebuke to somebody, or to lay your hands on somebody who is hurting, or weep some tears with one who is weeping. Whatever it is that you sense that God is moving you with, move! Because God has given you those gifts.

For us. Why? To unify this body, see? To unify it. My body is unified because my body takes care of itself.

Number five. Let's move ahead. God has given gifted leaders that promote unity.

Gifted leaders that promote unity. Verse 11. And He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and some teachers.

I added one word there. All functioning differently for the common goal. And what is the common goal? You see, what God is saying in this Scripture is that God gifts leaders also.

There is a difference. All of us have gifts. All of us have been given a measure of grace.

But God gifts men to be leaders in His body for very specific reasons. What are those reasons? For the perfecting, the maturing, the equipping of the saints. That's who you are.

You are the saints. God's consecrated ones. And I trust this morning that you are in fact one of God's consecrated ones.

Because that's what the word saint means. But God has given gifted men to the body for the perfecting, the maturing, the equipping of the saints. It's very important for us to understand how this works.

That the saints might function as a body. Verse 12. For the perfecting of the saints.

For the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the body of Christ. God has given gifted men whose responsibility is not just to give you a sermon on Sunday morning.

Or to visit you when you are sick. But to equip you and seek to bring you to maturity so that you can get out there and serve God. That's why God has given you gifted leaders.

It's not just for you to feast off of week by week. But rather that you might come to that place of maturity yourself. So that you can go out.

And as I was pondering this flow of verses here. I thought, okay, the work of the ministry. Maybe that's saving souls.

And the edifying of the body of Christ. That's discipling souls. Because brothers and sisters, both of those must be taking place in a true body of Christ.

The saving of souls and the discipling or the edifying of souls. Both of those must be taking place in a true unified body of Christ. And who is it that's responsible for that? Oh, the preachers are responsible to save the souls.

That's not what the Bible says. We are responsible to bring you to perfection. To bring you to maturity.

To equip you so that you can go out and win them. And draw them aside to you. And disciple them into a mature believer.

That's what God gives gifted men to the church for. Let's move on from there. To the vision that promotes unity.

What is the vision? What is it that we see? What is it before us that moves us forward? It is a mature man. A true unity in reality in the body of Christ. That is the vision.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Unto a perfect man. Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That's what God's goal is. That's what our responsibility is as leaders. Reverend, that's our responsibility.

Till we all come to the unity of the faith. And I know that never happens because we're always growing and we're always sending. And people are coming in and people are going out.

I know that never fully happens. But at the same time, our goal is to bring to maturity a body of believers. Unto the full stature.

A well-established body that is filled with Christ's fullness. That's our goal, brethren. Alright, let's look a little further.

Let's look number seven at the functioning members that promote unity. The functioning members that promote unity. Now we have these leaders who are perfecting, who are equipping the saints.

And as the saints get equipped, and as the saints begin to mature, guess what they begin to do? They begin to work toward the same beautiful end. It is my responsibility to help bring this body to maturity. It is also your responsibility to help bring this body to maturity by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

That is our responsibility. So now we have an equipping of a body that is all working toward the same beautiful end. A mature body of believers in this locality.

That's what God is after. As maturity comes, as equipping comes, as fullness comes in each one of us, many members are working toward that same beautiful goal. Are you there? Are you working that way? Is that your prayer? Is that your vision? God would have that be our heart and our vision.

As we meet one another through the week, as we gather together on Sunday morning. Oh God, it is partially my responsibility to bring this body to maturity. To care for this body in love.

It's part of my responsibility. And lastly, I want us to notice the results of this unity. The results of this unity is true unity in the body of Christ.

Verse 14 and following. But instead of being tossed this way and that way, by crafty men and promoters of new doctrines and all of these things, instead, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. Here again we have this functioning body.

But what's the end result? It's a body that is speaking to itself in love. A body that speaks to itself in love. And what is the goal? To grow up into Him, which is the head.

In all things. In all things. This is God's heart for us, brothers and sisters.

This is the result of this beautiful unity. But there's more. There's more than that.

But speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body under the edifying of itself in love. Now that's a mouthful.

But it simply means this. The end result is a body. A unified functioning body.

The end result is a body that is united to the head, which is Christ. The end result is a body that, united to the head, receives a flow of grace from that head, day by day by day. United as a body, and united to the head in such a way, that the body receives impulses from Him, and it cares for itself in love.

See, there are needs in this body this morning. This body is not whole. There are needs.

Somebody was hurting all week long. Someone is discouraged this morning. There's someone else who may be in total despair.

There's someone probably sitting here this morning who just said, I'm not even going. I'm not going. I don't want to go.

I don't want to face anybody. At the last minute they came. They're here.

There's somebody who needs a word from God. Some direction. Not necessarily because they're discouraged, but just some direction in their life.

There's needs in this body this morning. A body joined together by Him. A body held together by the flow of every joint one to the other.

A body where every part is operating in unity. This is God's heart for us here. The whole body caring for itself in love.

What is the result of that? Well, let me ask you a question, two. Two questions. Number one.

When Christ, in His earthly body, was here on this earth, what did He do? Second question. When Christ united the early church, the hundred and twenty, baptized by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ, when Christ united Himself as head to that one hundred and twenty there in the upper room, what did that one hundred and twenty do? When Christ also gathered in three thousand more on the day of Pentecost, and they were all also baptized by the same Spirit into that lively, vibrant, beautiful body of Christ upon the

earth, what did that body do? It shall be the same here, brothers and sisters. And all down through the annals of history, wherever you see a body that is functioning in the way that I am speaking very ideally today, you see a body that reaches out to a world around them.

You cannot separate it. Christ will reach the world! He will! And as soon as He's got a body that is receiving those impulses from His glorious head, as soon as He has a body where the grace is flowing down from His head onto its body, Christ begins to reach out to the world around Him. I gave a little history in the beginning, just so I could guide your thoughts a bit through the message.

But now I want to remind you of that history again here at the end. This church that Paul wrote these words to, it became a mature man. It became a mature body of Christ in the city of Ephesus.

And Ephesus had a hundred thousand Christians in it. Now it was a very large city. Very large.

Maybe five, six hundred thousand, I don't know. But it was a big city. But still! One hundred thousand believers in one city? And then there was Pergamos.

And then there was Sardis. And then there was Laodicea. And all down they go.

And we could list more of them than the ones that are listed in the book of Revelation. Why? This is what a mature body does. This is what a mature body looks like.

It reaches out. Brothers and sisters, there are two things that a mature body does. One, it edifies itself in love and brings itself up into maturity into Christ.

And number two, it adds to its body through evangelism. This is what a mature body does. We're talking this morning about the true unity in the body of Christ.

There are the facts of unity which we have in the Scriptures. There is the reality of unity which God in Christ is moving us toward. And may I remind you this morning that all the beautiful things that Jesus prayed in John chapter 17, all those prayers, they are also ours this morning.

They're just like prophetic promises given to us to enjoy, to believe, to receive. All these things God uses to move us as a church to the reality of the oneness of the body of Christ. And true reality produces a healthy body.

Moves, reaches, loves, exhorts, reproves, admonishes, heals, blesses, cares for, carries something, builds something. Thousands of things the body does when it's connected to the head. Oh, may God help us to continue to move toward this beautiful, beautiful body called the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

Amen. Thank you. For myself, I am blessed that God's Word is never old.

This is probably one of our favorite books or scriptures and much read and much preached on and much used, but yet still much needed to be heard again in our midst. So thank you, Brother Denny, being faithful, bringing such a simple yet profound truth to the body this morning. A healthy body.

And I know that we say sometimes about our physical bodies that we tend to not be grateful for our health. We forget to be grateful for our health until we get really sick sometimes. Then when we get well again, we remember.

Thank you, Lord, for a healthy body. And thank God for a healthy body this morning. I thank God for a physical body that's healthy.

And thank God for a local body that is healthy. Not perfect. Yes, we still have needs, but there's grace here.

Amen. That's a beautiful encouragement this morning. We prepare our hearts for communion this evening.

Preparing our hearts, our body. This body may flow in unity and the beautiful expression of that is a communion service. So, very timely message.

I'd like to open up for testimonies or personal testimonies or a blessing. And God has spoken to you through the message this morning. And you'd like to share that.

Have a little bit of time here. Well, I was blessed to be here. And I just would like to share how this works in real life.

As I have experienced both messages this week, maybe the last week. I was an older brother. That would be a confession that I would like to share.

There was someone that I looked at their material life and I questioned whether they were a Christian. And I shared it without going to the person first. And a wise old man came alongside of me this week and said, He said, did you really say that? And I said, yes, I did.

He says, what did you base it upon? I said, well, you're right, I was living in sin. So I was the older brother. And by doing that, I was not keeping unity in the spirit.

And I repented from that. In Christ, we are all in unity. But the flesh tries to destroy the unity.

So God bless you. Thank you. And may the Lord guide you as you walk with him.

Being mindful of him, Steve. Any others? Get your hands up. Yes, this is a very great blessing.

This morning is something that's just very, very near and dear to my heart. As I look at this, this community, this county and you see, I know we were talking mostly talking about unity of a certain local congregation. But I think we can also look at it in a more broader sense.

There's a verse here in Genesis chapter 11 that has stuck out to me already. And it's quite interesting. It's actually oneness or unity in a negative sense.

It's where we all know the story of the Tower of Babel and how there was one language. And the people decided that they're going to build a tower that's going to reach to heaven. And they're basically they're defying God.

And so in verse five, the Lord came down to see the city in the tower, which children of men built it. And the Lord said, behold, the people is one and they have all one language. And then he says, and this they begin to do.

And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do because they're one. And so he came down and he he confounded their languages so that they couldn't understand each other anymore. And thus they were the very thing that they were afraid of happened.

They were scattered to the ends of the earth. And then when you go to Acts chapter two, where the spirit of God came and the church was birthed, then they all spoke in the same language again, or at least they spoke that every everybody could understand. And they were all one.

They were all together in one accord. And you see the result. Again, as people became one, there was great things that happened.

They were able to do things that, you know, were completely impossible. And I think it's a very valuable lesson there. You know, even as we we look around, you know, looking at the the world around us.

You know, we have comparing what we have here in the United States and comparing that with with some of the third world countries and other places where things are in desolation and poverty. And we have what we have because there's people that are willing to lay down their own motives and their own lives for the cause of of a greater purpose. And, you know, we think of the the towers that went down in September 11th a couple of years ago.

Many countries that would be a feat that's impossible because the people are not able to lay down their own ambitions to work together for a common cause. And I know that's a kind of a, you know, a worldly perspective. But I think it's we can we can learn from that as well.

So I was just very blessed and encouraged to hear a message like this. It's something, like I said, it's very dear to my heart. And I, I could go on and say a lot more, but I think I'll leave it at that.

Thank you, Steve. I'd just like to encourage us also in that in the matter of exhorting one another. You know, this that's a means of ministering to the body, you know, during the week, like like Hebrews brings out exhorting one another daily.

And just this week I was in spiritual conversation with a few brethren. And, you know, it's just something when you minister the word of when you're talking in spiritual conversation around God's word or the things of the kingdom of God, how they minister and speak to the heart. I mean, God just by his spirit brings those things home, whether it's a need in my life or.

So I just want to encourage us in that matter as a body. You know, I know we meet her together Sundays and often don't see each other during the day, but we have our phones, you know, to call one another and minister to one of them, just be engaged in some sort of spiritual conversation when we do connect with one another. Yes, I thank the Lord for the message this morning.

One of the things that God speaks to my heart is. Brother Denny said that if the Lord is speaking to you to go. Then go.

And as we heard the words this morning about the body and then what you shared, Brother Denny, in the beginning of the message out of Corinthians. And here he says that, you know, God has tempered the body together, having given the more abundant honor to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and whether one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. And I just. Would like to share that in my heart.

I do desire to obey the spirit of the Lord when God is saying go. But I also want to be honest with you today that it takes courage to care. It takes courage to go.

And especially when we realize. Reminds me of a message Brother Kenny shared one time here about. Our relationships are fragile and handle with prayer.

I believe is how he worded that. And so before we go. Let us prepare our hearts in prayer.

And that there is care in our hearts and love for our brother. It's not to go setting straight, but there is a real care. And I think that is a. I know it's an area I need to grow in, and I think it's an area that we as a body have need to grow in.

And I don't say that to scold anyone, but to encourage us. That when the spirit of God is speaking to our hearts to go. That we would get on our face before the Lord.

And. Take courage to care. And to rejoice with those that rejoice that's easy.

But then to weep with those that weep mourn with those that mourn. And to be willing to give a word. Of care and love in the body so that we may mature and grow.

So I thank you, Brother Denny, for the word. And then, Brother Luke, I don't know where you are, but my heart is still burning from what you shared also. And I just.

Just, you know, convicted that. Can it be said of me that I seek the lost? Jesus came to seek after the lost. Or am I just happy and contented in my Christian life? Or does my heart beat for the lost? And seek after the lost to seek and to save.

The lost. So thank you. My heart's been ministered to.

I was reflecting this morning on the parable of the two prodigals. And one thing that caught my attention in a new way was that. The father did not.

Mail financial help to his son in the pigpen. And yet he welcomed his son back. And for the elder prodigal again, we see the father did not bring him a plate of food, but welcomed him in.

And we can understand from that that. It holds true that the Lord is calling and welcoming people. He is not there to bless them in their sinful state or try to make us feel good when we are outside.

He's calling us in. And that's his goal for us. Thank you for that observation.

I've been richly blessed. My heart is going many directions with the message. One is our.

One thought I had as we were reading in Ephesians. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. I thought of the bonds, ionic and covalent bonds.

And how that the covalent bonds we can naturally share with our brother and sister. Because it just shares really easily. We're sharing bonds, ionic bonds.

They have the positive and the negative. And we're drawn together in a bond because of our differences. And that we need each other.

And that's why we share together. And so sometimes it's easy sharing, but sometimes we can appreciate the differences. And we can share that way.

That just blessed me. We can go out with the application, but we can also go to the family. And how that there's the unity that we have in the family.

We've been talking together as a family. What is our goal together? So we can have unity all going the same direction. What is our family vision? And I'm reading further along also in Ephesians.

There's a therefore in verse 17. I say therefore, and then the next line is putting off the old man. The next paragraph is putting off the old man, putting on the new man.

And applying that in the family. It's when we put off those natural reactions in the flesh. When there is someone that's opposite in character in our family.

It takes the grace of God to respond. In a way to keep the unity of the spirit in the family, as well as in the body of Christ. And so I was just really blessed with the meditation on this.

I've heard teachings on the parables on several times. And the thing that really spoke to me was the first couple verses that preceded the parables. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

And then Jesus went into the parable. In the Old Testament, when God addressed the Jews, he addressed them in the singular. The whole nation was singular.

I heard a Messianic rabbi speak, and he said that when a Jewish soldier falls to his death, the whole nation mourns as one of their own has fallen. And they look at what happens if one does something shameful, it shames the whole community. And we don't have that sense in our culture here in this country.

But that's the way the church is supposed to be. That if one person does something, we should all rejoice if it's something to rejoice about. If it's something where they've fallen and they've brought shame to themselves, they bring it to the whole community and we should grieve together.

But here the Pharisees, this is what the Lord spoke to me this morning. The Pharisees and the scribes had looked at the weaker brother. And they had judged, found guilty, and accused and condemned the weaker brother.

And Jesus addressed that sin by sharing these three parables. And he shows how first the shepherd, then the woman with the lost coin, and then the father went to the nth degree to find that one which was fallen. And I know the word prodigal conjures up, not conjures up, but connotes a negative connotation because we attribute it to sinful living.

But the definition that was given this morning by our brother is that it was extravagant waste and reckless. And if we looked at the father, we would think that his love for the son who took no regard for his relationship with his father or his father's inheritance and went and squandered it, that his love for that son was reckless. That it was wasteful because he didn't deserve it.

But I think what Jesus is trying to say is that we have a father in heaven that sent his son. He gave everything he had and he didn't. Jesus said, I don't condemn you.

Go and sin no more. And that we're not to sin by condemning one another. We don't know what's in other people's hearts.

And I have to confess before you that I have been guilty of passing judgment on people and accusing them. And when I do, I'm not participating with the kingdom of God and allowing the spirit of Christ to live through me. I'm participating with the enemy of our souls who's called the accuser of the brethren.

And if anything destroys unity in the body of Christ, it's when we accuse one another in our hearts. Because it sets us up and it puts them down. And we lose that spirit of lowliness and humility that Brother Denny was talking about.

So I guess I would just say I thank you and I thank the Lord for what he revealed to me. And I'd exhort all of us to love. The first commandment was to love one another as he's loved us.

And the second one was to go into all the world. And it doesn't do any good to go into all the world and preach the gospel if we haven't fulfilled the first commandment first. So thank you.

Thank you. And may God bless you. The Lord spoke to me through Brother Luke's message in that the elder was reckless in his relationship with his father.

And I was thinking of myself and my quiet time with the Lord and how I take that for granted many times. And I want to use a gift of encouragement to encourage my dear sister Charmaine who's leaving this week or next week for Indonesia. She's been a wonderful blessing in my life and I'm going to miss her greatly.

And I just want to bless her and pray that God will bless her. Thank you for that.

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