

A bundle of Sticks

by Lloyd Brubacker

This sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and brotherly love within a community, using the object lesson of a bundle of sticks to illustrate the strength found in togetherness. It addresses the dangers of division over non-essential matters and the power of being united in Christ. The message encourages gratitude, perspective, and the recognition of true power found in the teachings of Jesus and the cross.

Scripture: Psalms 133:1, John 17:20, Romans 15:5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Peter 3:8

Topics: "Unity in Community", "Strength in Togetherness"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning. Are there any prayer requests for this morning? Okay. They put a curfew now and I don't know what else is going to happen when they get back.

Alright. Well, that's all. Let's stand.

Good morning. Father, we thank you for this time together this morning, fellowship. Help us be faithful and encourage one another.

Pray for all the brothers and sisters here and the ones that are not here. Pray for Harvey as he travels back this week, Lord willing. And pray for Delmo as he travels back to California.

And also for his wife's health and just wisdom what to do. Just help us all to draw closer to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

I told the older boys earlier that I'll need a volunteer for Sunday. But my props were too small and I think they would do damage to them. I'm going to do an object lesson.

I had planned this since my last one. I was going to do it after the service, but then I thought we might just sing and record. Or maybe not record, but sing this afternoon.

I thought maybe other people could get something out of it too. It's about the story of a man and seven sons. Well, the original author didn't put in the seven sons.

It's called A Bundle of Sticks. I remember reading this story, I don't know if it's been over ten years ago. Anyway, some of you may know it.

Titus, you want to help me hand out a few things to the little boys? Let's see here. So, I want to see if the little boys can break this bundle of sticks. And by little boys I mean like Silas or Paul or Andreas.

Don't use your knees, okay? Because I don't know how tough these are. Probably cut in any ways. Let's see if they can break it.

Hand it to a few, you can give it to Nehemiah too, see if you can break it. And then maybe hand it to... And I'll read the story as you try to break it. See if you can.

Alright, this is how the story goes. This was written back in 600 AD. It was written by a Greek slave, supposedly.

I forgot the name of the guy. But he wrote a bunch of novels or little short moral stories. It is.

Yep, that's the guy. So this is what he said, and this is a slight paraphrase, but it's fairly close. There was an old man who had seven sons who always fought one another.

On the point of death of the old man, he summoned his sons around him. To give them a parting advice. He ordered his servants to bring a bundle of sticks.

And said to the oldest son, break it. The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts was unable to break the bundle. The other sons also tried, but none of them was successful.

Then he said, untie the bundle. And each of you take a stick. So Titus here, give the boys that tried already.

We can go untie that bundle, but that way it can keep being passed around, I guess. And give them a stick and see if they can break one stick. Do you think that's possible? Okay, let's try that.

When they had done so, he called out to them. Now break it. And each of the sticks was easily broken.

Looks like that's what's happening again this morning. The sticks break pretty easy by themselves. You see the meaning, said the father.

Individually you can easily be conquered. But together you have strength. And that's what my opening is this morning about.

It's just a short object lesson. I would like to take this principle or this story a little closer home. I'll start with little children.

Often, I don't know how many times I've heard at least something in this sense. Where a child says, I will never play with you again. Or something like that.

Or I'm not going to play with that toy ever again this day. Or all kinds of phrases like that. And they get mad at each other.

They're kind of divided. But their lack of unity or disunity and unity goes up and down like a roller coaster. Just pretty quick.

You look around five minutes later and they're playing again. As you go a little older. As you get a little older into adolescence.

Children tend to think more for themselves. Young it's just pretty quick. It's about a toy.

It's about something they want. Just up and down. But as they get older.

Start thinking more for ourselves. And guess what? Almost 100% of the time we have the best idea in our own estimation. Unfortunately, I guess that's the way you learn.

I'll bring up a few examples. There's a host you could go over, I guess. And I'm only speaking more from a man or a young guy's perspective growing up.

I don't know what all girls go through. Or what they have. I'm sure there's some things.

But one thing that comes to my mind is the tension between young men on small things. Like best equipment. Ford truck versus Chevy.

Or Milwaukee versus DeWalt. And of course a person that's defending whichever position always has the best idea. And this is the greatest thing that could be.

And here's what. Remington versus Ruger. It just goes on and on.

This bow versus that bow. I've heard a similar conversation here. We used to do it.

It's just what comes out. As we have these opinions and we're expressing them. But this is kind of where it gets bad.

So having an opinion on something is not bad. It's a preference. But this is where it gets a bad light to this.

And it forms a disunity. When you look at the other person that likes a DeWalt and you like a Milwaukee, you're like, he's not getting it. If he'd use his brains, he'd surely understand.

Why this certain tool's better. Or whatever it may be. And in that sense, the division or the slight maybe tension or just a lack of unity comes from a person that feels that his idea is superior to the rest.

A step above. And it goes both ways. It can be over two different things.

And sometimes even flip in between. Another one I want to touch on. And this one's a little more personal.

It's something that I experienced growing up. One thing I had to work through. Is when... And this is for a congregation setting like this.

It's not so much from a background of society. When a boy or a girl likes another boy or girl and you think it's obvious, like a person thinks it's obvious or suspects that there's another person in the congregation that likes the same person. This creates a jealous disunity where there's just something in between you and that other person.

This is typically, I mean, I think in the more worldly sense it gets settled sometimes pretty violently as people get older. But in more of a setting like this, this is how I feel it can go down. This creates a jealousy and kind of a disunity.

It might not be very obvious, it's more subtle. Just these secret things that you have in your heart between two different people that is pretty worthless because it usually ends up not being the way that we think it's going to turn out. And history repeats itself.

I know most of us probably to some degree or another dealt with something similar to that. And as young children growing up, you're more than likely going to deal with something like that. This is my advice.

The best thing to remember in my opinion is that that boy or girl is not yours. It's not. So keep your feelings turned off and don't let these sort of tensions build up secretly.

If you cannot turn them off, talk with your parents. I think every parent here, or I believe every parent here has enough wisdom and experience to help their child through that. But it's not wise.

And if you get older, I mean, things can change. But first be obedient to God, then impress your father and mother. Be in very good standing with them.

Maybe the other father or mother will allow you to have their daughter, or your father or mother will allow that son to have you. That's when you're older. God first, your family next, then worry about the rest.

Then as we get into adulthood, we strive to serve Christ. And this is where, this is still touching on unity and disunity. There are things that our conscience as individuals does not allow us to do, and other people's conscience are not bugged by this, for whatever reason.

Paul touches on some of those subjects. And it can be hard to know what is critical and what is not critical. Where to show mercy, or not.

And examples would be like food, or clothing, or types of implied theology, or ideas of hosts of different topics. It's a big realm that we get into. The question, this is where the question needs to be, what is holding us together? There are many clubs, fraternities, churches, and so on, tied together with something.

But not with the strings that stand the fire of Christ. I thought of bringing a torch and doing an example, but we'll skip that this time. They look fairly strong and invincible.

Some of these clubs are very strong clubs. And the people are united pretty tight. But it's a facade.

At the end of the day, what you see is not what's reality. And on the day of judgment, it will definitely be clear. And most of the things that this unity is around is things of no importance.

In the sense of eternity. Take it away, and it falls apart. Take a hunting club, and you make hunting illegal, that club is going to fall apart.

What else? There would be a bunch of different examples. And I believe the devil is trying really hard to make us tie strings together. Things around ourselves that are of no importance.

And if he can get that done, then the true ties of godly, brotherly love will be replaced with nothing in reality. So I don't think two things can exist. If a fellowship is tied with brotherly, godly love, that's one thing.

If they're tied with some other thing, that's another thing. Both of them will not simultaneously exist. And I actually did bring something the boys can't break.

Even though they may be able to bend it. This. Now at the surface, it may not look like that much, but it has steel in the middle.

So you cannot break that. You might be able to bend it. And what I wanted to use this as is just an illustration.

If we're tied with love and godliness, with Christ as our core, it will not give. You cannot break that. And that's the most important thing.

But the devil won't stop there. And I wanted to touch on a few things. Here's a stack of sticks that I went and carved a bunch of indentions on it.

Notches, whatever. And I was thinking as an example, if we have bitterness towards a brother, so say there's a stack of sticks like that old man in the story and his sons. But if we hold bitterness in our hearts towards a brother, this is kind of how we look.

Or this. Maybe we have unforgiveness in our hearts. Maybe there's something that bugs us about a brother or sister.

Maybe we have a little envy or pride or a feeling of superiority. Maybe we feel wronged and will not let it go. All these things are like carving at these sticks and making them weak.

If all the brothers and sisters have these things in their hearts towards one another, it will break apart. Like it's just easy because there's no strength there. It's compromise.

Now if there's only a few that have broken sticks, so to speak, or carved away sticks, there's just a few people in a congregation. Maybe a congregation can bear that weight. And the tension kind of goes out across the congregation.

But it's still not good. And it weakens the brotherhood. The same goes for a marriage.

If there's things in a marriage that spouses have against each other, or just something that's egging them, bothering them, and it's not dealt with and healed, it weakens yourself like those sticks. Brotherhood is very important. If you're alone, it's impossible to see both sides of the picture.

I want to illustrate something here. Max, what do you see? It would be a good deal or idea. And Leroy, what do you see? It's a bad idea.

And inversely, if I do this, Good plan, let's do it. Doesn't look very good. My point with that is, when you're alone, regardless if it's circumstantial or not, there are things that you cannot see by yourself.

It just works that way. Concepts and ideas are only filtered through one mind, which usually lends to an unbalanced view. Sometimes it's circumstantial, but it's still not good.

It's a law of physics, put it that way. It's not really physics, but... This is why in the worldly arena, a president that makes good choices will listen to both conflicting views and pick out the best plan. Also within a brotherhood, now brotherhood simultaneously, I mean sisters and brothers, everybody together when I use that word.

Discouragement, doubt, frustration, and all these sorts of things tend to wear a person down more if they're alone. And if they do not have brothers or sisters to help them with their burdens, like Galatians 6.2, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. A brother from Germany one time was telling me how hard it is when he goes out preaching.

And if he's alone, he said it's just so discouraging, and there's just no one to talk to. And I think Hedema alluded to that as well. Another thing is, on the good side, accountability, encouragement, and stuff like that comes from working with a brotherhood.

A godly brotherhood is very important. Now it may seem kind of ironic to you, I thought this would probably go through some of your mindset. I'm thinking of doing an outreach and kind of leaving this brotherhood.

And I do realize there's dangers involved. But I guess I feel like it's an extension of this brotherhood. And I'm not leaving the cords that bind us.

So it's like a different thing. This is more, at least in my mind, even though I do think it's more dangerous. I'll read a few verses.

So let's listen. Psalms 133, verse 1. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together, dwell in unity. John 17, 20-21.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. Romans 15, 5-7. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 1-10. I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no division among you.

But that you are united in the same mind and same judgment. And then in 1 Peter 3-8. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.

I think that humble mind in the end there goes a long way. That's all I have this morning. Any questions, comments, corrections? Yeah, thanks, Brother Lloyd.

It's a blessing to be here this morning. I really did appreciate that object lesson. It was good, easy to understand, and very practical, true application.

I was just thinking about your unbreakable bundle up there, the one with the steel rod at the core. And I do think it's important that, I guess especially, I think about this a lot, and I've talked about it a lot, but especially since a lot of us have left one system or another. I think there's a tendency, and I don't know that it's entirely unhealthy, but there's this tendency to almost build up a little list in our minds of things that

don't quite fit, not the way that we see them.

Just aren't, we're not in agreement. It's not the right thing. And maybe in times past, and maybe this is just a human tendency in general, but you're kind of waiting, or you're kind of, it's almost maybe even a subconscious thing, you're kind of waiting, kind of waiting for the line to get crossed, kind of waiting for the scales to tip in the direction of you no longer have fellowship here.

But I think if we recognize and believe that that steel rod core is essential, an essential building material, and we don't try to replace it with other pet doctrines or pet ideas, those tendencies fade away. So that steel core being Jesus Christ himself and his teachings, he didn't call it a steel core, but he called it a rock that we could be founded on. And I just, I think that if we make that our, if we make that what we're striving for, then maybe we won't have a tendency to develop these little subconscious lists of weighing out whether we have fellowship or not.

I was very blessed by the message. Amen. Yeah, I too am very thankful, and just say amen.

I just wanted to share a thought I had today. I think about this frequently, and then a couple things Lloyd mentioned brought it to my mind again, how there's something in us, especially boys and men, maybe a little less so in girls naturally, but there's something in us boys that wants power. Like we want to be strong.

We want to have power. We, I mean, I just thought about the things that Lloyd mentioned that these young boys argue about. Think about them.

Ford versus Chevy. Milwaukee versus DeWalt. Ruger versus Remington.

Like, why? Because they're all related to which one has the most power to pull or to kill or to drive or, you know. And then I just think about what Jesus said. Or what the scriptures say about where the real power is and that it's in the cross.

And that, you know, the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. It's this cross bearing, willing to suffer, seeking the interest of others above our own, dying to ourselves, denying ourselves, like walking as a sheep to the slaughter without opening our mouth. That's where the power is.

That, you know, that has true substance in the middle. That unites us with others walking that way in a way that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Yeah, may we be found there.

I appreciate it. Praise the Lord. There is an arborist's website or blog.

When I started buying my chainsaws, so there is this forum that you can ask questions about, you know, the power of the chainsaw. So a person was asking there, so which one is better, the steels or the husk of iron? And then a man came into the thread and he wrote, here's the answer. Everybody knows that the steels are the best chainsaws.

Period. And then he wrote down, everybody knows that the husk of irons are the best chainsaws. Period.

And then he sent it back to the man. So I decided to like them both. Those are my two favorite brands.

And you go, if you don't find that man answering your question, you're going to find a person answering just one of them. This is the best one or that's the best one. It kind of sounds to me like I am of Paul and I am of Apollos and I am of Cephas and I am of Christ.

Argument in the church at Corinth. In the end, they all cut trees. In the end, they all burn gas.

It can hurt you if you don't know how to do it. And in a spiritual sense, I really appreciate what Brother Lloyd said because I do see that kind of conversation in spiritual matters between us. And it's really sad if we decide to divide over things that are not essential, I guess.

Not that there is non-essentials and essentials in the Bible. I don't think we're given the power by God to say this part of my word is good, this part of my word is bad, and we decide upon it. God has already decided and we just have to walk accordingly.

And I just desire that we're able to do what Paul said, that we all with one mind and one accord may say the same thing and believe the same thing and be united in the spirit and the bond of peace. Amen. Thank you, Lloyd, and I appreciate the comments of all the brothers too.

I think it's a true story about the two shoe salesmen that went over to Africa talking about perspective, like you showed Brother Max one side and Brother Leroy the other side, good and bad. The perspective, they look at it, but it was two shoe salesmen from two different companies and they went over to Africa and the first shoe salesman, when he went over there, he saw the people and they were going barefoot and he got discouraged and said, I'm going back, ain't nobody wearing shoes. And then the other shoe salesman from the other company, when he went over there and he sees all the people going barefoot, he wrote back to his company and said, send more shoes, ain't nobody wearing shoes.

It depends your perspective if you're an optimist or pessimist. No matter which state we're in, I think we should give thanks. Give thanks no matter what our circumstances.

If we're free, we're imprisoned, we're bond servants, man, woman, whatever, we should give thanks and perspective. Some of the other things, in the classes, one or the other, the gospel to the Greeks, it's a foolishness, and to the Jews, a stumbling block, but to us, it is the power of God and to salvation, the Lord be magnified. Amen.

May the Lord depend on you. May the Lord depend on you. Lord, your kingdom come to you.

Say a spirit brave and true. That he may depend on you. Seething with our own sick opinions.

Our response to deadly plight. Our wisdom and our communion. From the demons of the night.

The requires of brave and true. May he depend on you. May the Lord depend on you.

Lord, your kingdom come to you. Say a spirit brave and true. That he may depend on you.

From his throne the Father sees us. In the temple a silvery veil. And our leader too receives us.

And we shall again unveil. Joy and proud the brave and true. May the Lord depend on you.

May the Lord depend on you. Lord, your kingdom come to you. Say a spirit brave and true.

That he may depend on you. I need thee every hour. Most gracious Lord.

No better voice of God. Than he is of old. I need thee, oh I need thee.
Every hour I need thee. Oh bless me now my Savior. I come to thee.
I need thee every hour. Stay thou nearby. Temptations lose their power.
When thou art nigh. I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee.
Oh bless me now my Savior. I come to thee. I need thee every hour.
Enjoy your pain. Come quickly and abide. For life is vain.
I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee. Oh bless me now my Savior.
I come to thee. I need thee every hour. Teach me thy will.
And my success. In thee fulfill. I need thee, oh I need thee.
Every hour I need thee. Oh bless me now my Savior. I come to thee.
I need thee every hour. Oh show me why. Oh make me thine indeed.
Thou blessed Son. I need thee, oh I need thee. Every hour I need thee.
Oh bless me now my Savior. I come to thee. Praise Him, praise Him.
Jesus our blessed Redeemer. Sing o'er this wonderful hour great. Hail Him, hail Him.
High as the angels in glory. Praise the Father in His holy name. Like a shepherd Jesus provides to the world.
In His arms He carries them all day long. Praise Him, praise Him. God is excellent, great in us.
Praise Him, praise Him. Heaven and earth rejoice a song. Praise Him, praise Him.
Jesus our blessed Redeemer. For our sins He suffered and bled not. We are not part of eternal salvation.
Hail Him, hail Him. Jesus the crucified. Sound His praises.
Jesus to all our sorrows. God unbounded, wonderful, deep and strong. Praise Him, praise Him.
God is excellent, great in us. Praise Him, praise Him. Heaven and earth rejoice a song.
Praise Him, praise Him. Jesus our blessed Redeemer. Heav'nly hordes close now with one sound a string.
Jesus, Savior, reigneth forever and ever. Crown Him, crown Him. Prophet and priest and King.
Christ is coming over the world victorious. Power and glory unto the Lord belong. Praise Him, praise Him.
God is excellent, great in us. Praise Him, praise Him. Heaven and earth rejoice a song.
Hallelujah, praise Yehovah. From the heavens praise His name. Praise Yehovah in the highest.
All His angels praise proclaim. All His angels together praise Him. Star and moon and stars on high.

Praise Yehovah in the highest. All His angels together praise Him. Star and moon and stars on high.

Praise Yehovah in the highest. All His angels together praise Him. All His angels together praise Him.

His glory is exalted far above the earth and sky. Let them praise His name, Yehovah. They were made at His command.

Then forever be established. This decree shall ever stand. From the earth, O praise Yehovah.

Holy, flooded dragons all. Fire and hail and snow and vapor. Stormy winds that hear Him call.

Let them praise His name, Yehovah. For His name alone is high. And His glory is exalted far above the earth and sky.

All ye fruitful trees and cedars. All ye hills and mountains high. Creeping beans and beasts and cattle.

Birds that in the heavens fly. Kings on earth and all ye people. Righteous, greater, and judges all.

Praise His name, young men and women. Saints and married, children small. Let them praise His name, Yehovah.

For His name alone is high. And His glory is exalted. And His glory is exalted.

And His glory is exalted far above the earth and sky.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/s7i9huSQ3gl.mp4>

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