

Flint Hills Bible Church
Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
A Theology of Unity

I. Why strive for peace and unity?

Sometimes we might wonder why it is so important to be at peace with one another. Why do the biblical authors command it so often? 2 Peter 3:8-12, Hebrews 12:14, Romans 12:18, 14:

One way to motivate our diligence in being at peace is to think about what happens when there is division and warring within the church.

1. What are some examples of unity that you see in the world? What are the things that unite people?

2. What happens when conflict and disunity take hold and go unresolved in these groups?

3. How are the effects of disunity in a church similar? How are they different?

If there is any group in existence that has reason to be unified, reason to deal with and resolve internal conflicts, it has to be the church - body of Jesus Christ. This morning my prayer is that we will value and pursue, and sacrifice for the unity of the church. That we would not allow conflict to go unresolved, but rather be a local church characterized by peace, unity and love as we seek to glorify God and walk in the good works he has for us.

Objectives:

We will consider how unity is central to the Trinity in Scripture
We will identify unity as a major theme in salvation
We will see unity as a key indicator of Christian faith

II. Unity Defined

Definitions:

Unity: State of being undivided; having oneness; a condition of harmony.

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (p. 1639)

Unity: The bringing together of separate or fragmented parts into a unified whole. It is God's ultimate goal to unite the whole of creation; his desire for unity is evident, too, in the life of his people. God himself acts as a unity in all his works.

Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies.

III. Unity in God

Perhaps the most fundamental reason that unity and peace ought to be so prized by Christians is because there is a perfect unity within God - the trinity. We see this in the following Scriptures.

Genesis 1:26

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

4. Who is the us, and our referring to?

Deuteronomy 6:4

4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Note: LORD in most modern translations refers to Yahweh - God's covenant, personal name. God in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word Elohim which is plural.

John 14:8-11

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

5. How do we see the unity of the Father and the Son in these verses?

John 14:25–26

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

6. Here we see all three persons of the trinity working together. How is the Spirit working with Christ and the Father?

IV. Unity as a theme of Christ's work

What did Christ come to do? What problem did he come to solve? In a real sense, the problem we all have is we have acted in ways that break the unity we were to have with God as his creatures. Adam and Eve once shared perfect relational unity with one another and with God. Sin shattered that unity.

Genesis 3:8-13

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

7. How did Adam and Eve’s sin affect them?
 - Relationship with God?
 - Relationship with each other?
 - Relationship to creation?

Ephesians 1:7–10

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

8. How is unity involved in God’s great plan?
9. How should this affect our view of one another?

John 14:18-20

V. Unity as an Indicator of Christian Faith

Ephesians 2:11-16

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

10. What does Christ accomplish in His people according to this passage?

John 17:20-26

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

11. What is the astonishing unity that Christ has accomplished for us?

1 Corinthians 12:12-26: Paul gives a thorough explanation of the church’s need for unity by using the metaphor of a physical body.

12. In light of this passage, what truths should inform the way we view one another (especially our differences) in the local body of believers?
13. How does the metaphor of one body with many members help us in our pursuit of peace and unity?

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

14. Christ has reconciled us, what are we to do as a result?
15. How can disunity hinder our call to be agents of reconciliation?

Summary:

Unity is something we are all called to. Union with Christ is what we all need in order to escape the wrath of God, it is what we look forward to when we consider heaven: closeness with our great God and Savior! We also see that it is God’s perfect, wise plan to have us walk through life with people who are very different from ourselves. May we reflect on the richness of God’s plan of redemption and reconciliation and be energized to promote unity and peace among the body of Christ.