

Series: A Healthy Church

“Church Unity”

1 Cor. 12:12, 13

Big Idea – God wants the Church to be a healthy, functioning body.

Many people think the church is an outdated, irrelevant institution that has outlived its usefulness and should be quietly ignored or laid to rest! NOT!

Jesus said the opposite:

Matthew 16:18 “... I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”

Several different metaphors or pictures used in the Bible for the church.

It is called the bride of Christ, the family of God, a flock of sheep, but also called something else. Notice:

1. The picture of our unity – the physical body

1 Corinthians 12:12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

Romans 12:4 Each one of us has a body with many parts, and these parts all have different uses.

5 In the same way, we are many, but in Christ we are all one body. Each one is a part of that body, and each part belongs to all the other parts.

The essence of a physical body is unity. So it is with the spiritual body of Christ. Christ is called the “head” of the body. He is the source of our life, our energy – from Him come all the things the that His body, the church, needs to function.

Cut off the head and the body is dead. That’s why churches who don’t preach Christ, are dead!.

2. The point of entry to the body – salvation

There is only one way into the body, the church, through Christ.

John 14:6 I am the way...

John 10:9 I am the door, by me if anyone enters in he will be saved.

1 Corinthians 12:13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

What if no Holy Spirit?

Romans 8:9 You are ruled by the Spirit, if that Spirit of God really lives in you. But the person who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ.

Romans 8:14 The true children of God are those who let God's Spirit lead them.

3. The prevention of unity in the body

The false idea that there are "super saints" – someone who is so on fire for the Lord that all the others consider them abnormal, when actually they are normal!

False hierarchy – clergy/laity. Ministers and non-ministers.

Truth? – Christ is the head, we are all equal in the body, just have different functions. All are called to be servants of the Lord – that's what a minister is.

Isolationism – no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian

Division – church at Corinth is good example of this.

1 Corinthians 1:10 I beg you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree with each other and not be split into groups. I beg that you be completely joined together by having the same kind of thinking and the same purpose.

11 My brothers and sisters, some people from Chloe's family have told me quite plainly that there are quarrels among you.

12 This is what I mean: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another says, "I follow Apollos"; another says, "I follow Peter"; and another says, "I follow Christ."

13 Christ has been divided up into different groups! Did Paul die on the cross for you? No! Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No!

People divide over:

Personality – Paul/Apollos/Peter/Christ

Politics – Parties/

Music – styles, volume, length, standing/sitting, clapping, etc.

Ethnicity – I got word that someone of a mixed race visited our church, and said they had a bad experience and would not come back because, unfortunately, someone went up to them and asked, "So what are you, anyway?"

Genders – Straight/Gay/Bi/Trans/ - the list goes on and on!

Galatians 3:28 In Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek, slave and free person, male and female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 (MSG) ...Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. The position of our unity – called out from the world

Greek word for church in NT is ekklesia – called out ones

John 17:14 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

15 I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.

16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

God put the church into the world.

The devil put the world into the church!

5. The prayer for our unity – the Lord's prayer

John 17:20 "I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who will believe in me because of their teaching.

21 Father, I pray that they can be one. As you are in me and I am in you, I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world will believe that you sent me.

6. The purpose of our unity – show the world who Jesus is

John 17:22 I have given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be one, just as you and I are one.

23 I will be in them and you will be in me so that they will be completely one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you loved them just as much as you loved me.

7. The practice of our unity

Humility

Philippians 2:3 When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.

4 Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.

Romans 12:3 Because of God's grace given to me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

Ephesians 4:2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Love

John 13:34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

Romans 5:5 The love of Christ is shown in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom is given to us.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make your love grow more and multiply for each other and for all people so that you will love others as we love you.

Did Jesus say to his followers, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have a certain bumper sticker on your car?”

John 13: 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.