

## The Unity Of The Spirit

Franklin Church of Christ  
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AM Worship

### Introduction:

Why does the Franklin Church of Christ exist? **Ephesians 3:20-21** answers for us, saying, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” We do not exist to meet three times a week. We do not exist to run a Bible class program. We do not exist to have a nice building. Rather, we exist in order to glorify Jehovah God who has graciously granted salvation to us through the death of His Son. We have studied this verse before, but notice what Paul says as he continues in the following verses. In **Ephesians 4:1**, he begins, “I, *therefore*, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to ...” If the church in Ephesus was going to glorify God, the individual members had to live a certain way. It stands to reason then, if we want to glorify God as a church, we must also follow Paul’s exhortation. Paul’s overall theme is that to glorify God, the church must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. A divided church does not glorify God. But a united church does. Notice that term—“endeavor.” Unity is not passive; it is active. Unity does not occur accidentally; it occurs when everyone involved is working at it. Examine **Ephesians 4** and note the unity for which we must endeavor, how we can strive for this unity and who must be involved in this unity.

### Discussion:

- I. God has standards of unity for His church.
  - A. The divided, denominational “Christianity” around us continually cries out for unity. However, the disunity and division continues. People want unity, but they do not want a standard of unity. We are told that what we believe does not matter as long as Jesus is our Lord. But Jesus said it is not enough to claim Him as Lord, we must do the Father’s will (**Matthew 7:21-23**).
  - B. Paul, while stressing the need for unity, demonstrates that the unity which glorifies God is based on stringent standards (**Ephesians 4:4-6**).
    1. *There is one body*—Jesus established His church (**Matthew 16:18**). We are not at liberty to establish our own churches.
    2. *There is one Spirit*—Jesus claimed the Spirit would reveal all truth (**John 16:13**). Any other source will bring division. Everything the one church does must be based on this source.
    3. *There is one hope of your calling*—According to **Titus 3:7**, our calling and hope are wrapped up in eternal life. While the gospel provides other benefits, if our hope is in anything less—*i.e.* social reform, physical health, material prosperity, etc.—then we will end in division.
    4. *There is one Lord*—Jesus is our Lord and Christ (**Acts 2:36**). But this is more than a statement, it is a way of living (**Luke 6:46**).
    5. *There is one faith*—The modern system of multiple faiths is absolutely unbiblical. We are to be of Christ and our faith is to be based on His Word alone (**Romans 10:17**).
    6. *There is one baptism*—There is only one way to enter into a relationship with Christ, obey the revelation of the Spirit and submit to the one Father. There is only one way to answer the one calling, enter the one body and declare the one faith. That is in baptism for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**).
    7. *There is one God and Father of all*—There is not a god for the Jews and a god for the Gentiles. Our duty is to submit to Him and Him alone (**Matthew 6:24**).
- II. How must I behave if we are to be united?
  - A. It is one thing to speak of these standards of unity. It is another to take a hard look at my life and learn how I must walk in order to unify around these standards. We can all declare these standards of unity. But are we living so that we can be united around them?
  - B. Paul summarizes how we should live by saying that we must walk worthy of the calling with which we were called (**Ephesians 4:1**). Being called by Christ through His gospel mandates change. It is not enough to claim that we are Christians, we must walk as Christians. Paul mentions several specific changes in the last half of **Ephesians**, from how you should talk to how you should act when you get angry; from how to behave at work to how to behave at home.

For the sake of our study though, note the attitudes which Paul mentions in **Ephesians 4:1-3** that govern the specific actions. If we will be united, we must walk with these attitudes.

1. *We must walk in lowliness and humility.* As Paul also taught in **Philippians 2:3**, we must view others as more important. Strong's Enhanced Lexicon provides an interesting definition to this word, saying it is having "a deep sense of one's own (moral) littleness." That is, lowliness means realizing that I am not the pinnacle of wisdom and spiritual maturity. I have no right or reason to look down from the lofty heights of spirituality on anyone. Rather, I must look up to others. One of the biggest destroyers of unity is the arrogance that says, "I am smarter, I am stronger, I am better. If everyone would just be more like me this place would be wonderful." No, if everyone became just like you, they would still be sinners worthy of hell. We all need to be more like Christ. Whatever we do, must be done with this humility.
2. *We must walk in gentleness.* Because of the modern misconceptions of gentleness, this is one of the most difficult biblical concepts to present. Gentleness does not equal weakness or softness. It is the opposite of violence. In the KJV, the contrast is presented in **Titus 3:2**, in which Paul says that God's servant is not to be a brawler but treat all with meekness. Our duty is not to seek fights, constantly looking for what others are doing wrong so we can jump them. We are to be gentle. We are to look for reasons to praise and encourage others. When we have to reprimand, rebuke and correct, we do it gently, urging them, encouraging them and directing to the better path. And we do so because we want them to be saved.
3. *We must walk with longsuffering.* We are to be patient. We must recognize that people do not become mature Christians overnight. As **I Peter 2:2** says, new Christians are babies in Christ. We need to be like Jesus was with His disciples, patiently continuing with them, even when they let Him down. Consider our own babies and children. How many of us waited to praise our children until they actually walked perfectly? Not a single one. We praised them the first time they even tried to stand up. Then we praised them when they finally stood up. Then when they fell down, we praised them for trying. And on it goes. But with babes in Christ, we are irritated with them until they are mature. And even then, we can find chinks in their armor for which to gripe at them. We need to have patience and be longsuffering.
4. *We must bear with one another in love.* Love covers a multitude of sins (**I Peter 4:8**). When we act out of love for one another, we will have unity. But too often we act out of love for ourselves. We get upset because of the way people treat us, instead of focusing on how we treat others. Think about the absolute worst sinner you know. Now think about the most irritating and annoying person you know. Now, think about the weirdest, oddest person you know. Do you know what each of those people have in common with one another and with you? God loved them so much He sent His Son to die for them. When we look at people we need to remember that. If God loved them, we ought to love them (**I John 4:11**).

### III. Who is responsible to produce congregational unity?

- A. We must note what Paul says in **Ephesians 4:7-16**. Too often we believe that unity is what the preacher or elders are supposed to work on. But that is not the picture Paul presents.
- B. In **Ephesians 4:11**, Paul points out that God appointed certain offices within the church to accomplish part of the church's work. Their job is to equip the saints. Each of these offices has a role in the unity of the church. But they are not the only ones who must endeavor for unity.
- C. These roles were given in order to equip every saint to be a minister in the church. These roles were given in order to equip every saint to be an edifier in the church. The responsibility then for building up the church until we attain the unity of the faith is on every individual. Paul goes on to explain that the unity for which we are striving comes about when every part does its share. The unity for which we are striving comes about when you are doing your share. You are responsible for our unity. What are you doing to attain unity in this church?

### Conclusion:

Are you endeavoring to help this congregation keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? If so, what are you actually doing? Do not be satisfied saying, "I am not doing anything against the unity of the church." The issue is not what you are doing against unity, but what are you doing to promote it. You must endeavor to keep this congregation united. Only then will God be glorified by this church.