



Lessons for Leaders

Biblical Principles for Successful Leadership

MINISTERING TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE



The Blessing and Importance of Christian Unity

In a world constantly filled with wars, conflicts, and divisions among nations and between people, the fellowship and unity that Christians enjoy despite our many differences is a rare and precious thing.

Despite the many ways that Christians are different from each other, we can, in Christ, discover a supernatural oneness and love unlike any other relationship that we will ever experience on earth. It is a taste of the perfect unity that we will one day enjoy in Heaven.

When we we learn to live out this love and unity, we bring glory to God and answer the prayer which Jesus prayed for the Church right before His crucifixion: "That they may be one." (John 17:11b NIV). In John 17:21-24 (Holman), Jesus continues this great prayer:

May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me.

I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely one, so the world may

SCRIPTURES OF THE WEEK



"Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."

John 17:11b (NIV)

"And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

Colossians 3:14 (NASB)



New York Families

NEW YORKER'S FAMILY RESEARCH FOUNDATION



know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they will see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world's foundation.

Is it Possible to Have Diversity, Unity, and Love all at the Same Time?

With God's help, the answer to this question is "yes" for Christian believers that follow the Biblical exhortations to guard and protect the unity of the Body of Christ. God gives His people a spiritual oneness that helps us to transcend our differences, whether those differences are cultural, political, ethnic, or theological, or are simply differences of style, opinion, or taste.

Five Types of Christian Unity

(I) The Unity of a Common Faith

Ephesians 4:1b-6 (NIV) says, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Though Christians may differ from each other in countless other ways, the fundamental fact of our common Christian faith unites us. We all serve the same God. We all have been saved by the same Savior. We all are called to live by the same Bible. And we all are members of the universal Church and Body of Christ—the same Kingdom of God.

God gives His people a spiritual oneness that helps us to transcend our differences.

(II) The Unity of a Common Identity

(A) The unity of a common spiritual identity was first made possible between the Jews and "Gentiles" (or non-Jewish people) of Jesus' day that accepted Christ as Savior. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, Jews considered Gentiles to be intrinsically unclean; in the Book of Acts, Peter declared: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile" (Acts 10:28b NIV).

(B) Through a series of supernatural events (see Acts 10:1-11:18), God revealed to Peter and the other disciples that the life-changing salvation of Jesus Christ was meant not for Jews only, but for anyone who was willing to repent of their sins and accept Christ as Savior. Once the Jewish believers (following some initial resistance) accepted that God's offer of salvation through Christ was available to all, Jewish and Gentile believers learned to love and accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and members of God's family. As a result, the Gospel has spread to the farthest corners of the globe; the Church of Jesus Christ—now one billion strong—is the most diverse body of people on Earth.

The Church of Jesus Christ—now one billion strong—is the most diverse body of people on earth.

(C) Paul describes the unity of a common identity in Ephesians 2:14-16 (BSB) when he writes: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has torn down the dividing wall of hostility... He did this to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace and reconciling both of them to God in one body through the cross, by which He extinguished their hostility." The New Living Translation of Ephesians 2:14-15 reads: "For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people... He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups."

(D) Christians are a "new people," redeemed by God and called to be members of His eternal Kingdom. Peter describes our new status and identity in Christ in these words: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV).

NOTES





(III) The Unity of a Common Spiritual Life

(A) When a person accepts Christ, a new internal life is imparted to that person through a divine spiritual rebirth. New believers become “*partakers of the divine nature*” (II Peter 1:4 KJV) through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ comes to live inside them. I Corinthians 12:13 (NASB) says, “*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*” The unity of a common spiritual life is one of the deepest unities we can ever experience with other human beings. From a spiritual point of view, Christians are actually closer to God and to one another than we are to our own flesh-and-blood families.

(B) The spiritual kinship between believers is called “fellowship” in the Bible. True Christian fellowship means that at the deepest level, believers share the same spiritual life. In Christ, we are spiritual brothers and sisters; together, we constitute the Body of Christ. This reality explains why, when Saul was persecuting Christians, Jesus appeared to him and asked “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*” (Acts 9:4 ESV) (emphasis added).

True Christian fellowship means that at the deepest level, believers share the same spiritual life.

(C) As the Body of Christ, Christians are God’s dwelling place upon the Earth; in I Corinthians 3:16 (NET), the Lord describes us, collectively, as a holy temple: “*Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?*”

(IV) The Unity of a Common Purpose

(A) All people were created by God for a common “*eternal purpose*” (Ephesians 3:11 KJV). That purpose is to bring God glory and pleasure by becoming members of His heavenly family (Ephesians 3:15 KJV) and by helping to build the “*everlasting kingdom*” in which Christians serve together (Daniel 7:27 KJV).

(B) Nothing that Christians can accomplish during our earthly lives has any greater value than sharing the Gospel, encouraging others to join God’s family by placing their faith in Christ, and helping His Kingdom to grow. Christian unity is essential if we are to effectively accomplish the main purpose for which we exist. It is by learning to work together that we can best represent and build God’s kingdom on the earth.

(V) The Unity of a Common Destiny

(A) When we enter the next life in Heaven, Christians will experience a divine unity beyond any unity we have known on Earth. We will be together with the saints of all the ages in an atmosphere of perfect love, experiencing the unbroken presence of God. We will be one spiritual family, worshipping God with redeemed brothers and sisters from every nation on Earth. Revelation 5:6-10a (NET) describes this heavenly scene as follows:

Then I saw standing in the middle of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the middle of the elders, a Lamb that appeared to have been killed. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then he came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne, and when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders threw themselves to the ground before the Lamb. Each of them had a harp and golden bowls full of incense (which are the prayers of the saints). They were singing a new song:

*You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals
because you were killed,
and at the cost of your own blood you
have purchased for God
persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.
You have appointed them as a kingdom and priests to
serve our God...*

B) When we reach Heaven, Christians will forget the personal differences that we may have had while we lived and worked on the Earth. And while we are still here on Earth, we should strive to attain as much of that love and oneness as we can so that God’s will may be done “*on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10 KJV).

(C) Christian unity on Earth is a precursor to the ultimate heavenly unity which is God’s grand plan and purpose for the Church. Though our unity will be imperfect and incomplete in this life, in the end, God’s glorious plan will be perfectly accomplished in Heaven for all of eternity: “*He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment--to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will*” (Ephesians 1:9-11 NIV).



Christian Love and Unity Are Mandates from God That Reveal and Glorify Him

Christians' marching orders from God include two mandates from Him to show the world who He is.

(A) Christians are called to live in unity with one another. As Jesus prayed in John 17:22b (NLT), "May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."

(B) Christians are called to grow in a Christlike love for one another. Jesus instructed His disciples in John 13:34-35 (ESV): "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

In both of these ways, when we live in a supernatural love which transcends our differences, Christians give a testimony of the reality of Christ to those who do not yet know Him. This is something to which we are called; Colossians 3:11-15 (BSB) says:

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive any complaint you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which is the bond of perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful.

When we live in a supernatural love which transcends our differences, Christians give a testimony of the reality of Christ to those who do not yet know Him.



PASTOR DALE WALKER, CHAPLAIN

Greetings!

As a pastor serving Members of the New York State Legislature, it is my desire to make the life-changing truths of the Bible available to the Members in as many ways as possible. One way to accomplish this is through weekly Members Only Bible Studies.

Another way that I share the truths of God's Word with Members of the Legislature throughout the year is through the Facebook page entitled "New York State Legislative Bible Study," where I regularly post a "Scripture for the Day" or a "Great Christian Quotation" to help you start your day with inspiring spiritual truth. If you hit the "Like" button on the top right of the Facebook page beside the word "Message," these scriptures and quotations will appear on your Facebook wall whenever they are posted.

Rev. Walker is affiliated with
New Yorker's Family Research Foundation.



New York
Families

NEW YORKER'S FAMILY RESEARCH FOUNDATION