

Why Unity Matters
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Day One

In a society when there is so much discord and argument and division, unity is a rare thing. As a Christ-follower, why do we need to have unity? Jesus gives us this reason:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20-23).

Being unified in Christ and with the body of Christ is a powerful witness to the world of God's love. As Christians, our unity in Christ and with other Christians is essential.

But being united doesn't mean we are all the same. We are uniquely created with different gifts and talents. And yet united!

I love this saying: In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.

Christians need to be of the same mind on the core beliefs—things that matter—that are essential. In church we often recite or read the Apostles Creed, which states some core beliefs of faith: God is the creator. Jesus is his only son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, was crucified, died and buried. On third day, he rose again and sits at the right hand of God, and he will come to judge the world.

I'm summarizing here, but you get the idea.

For Christians, these are non-negotiable beliefs. It doesn't have anything to do with the worship music, or how the service should be ordered, or what we should wear to church, or any of those other things. Some of those things are important, but they are more preferences—so there's liberty—or freedom in the "non-essential" things. We may prefer a certain worship style and find other worship styles unsettling, but if those core beliefs are shared, then there's freedom to worship.

And above all, there's charity—love! You and I need to make room for other people's preferences. It doesn't have to be done exactly our way. God created us uniquely and as a result there are unique ways to worship and serve him.

Day Two

How can you work together with others but have so many differences? The Apostle Paul gives a great example in 1 Corinthians 12 of how you and I are each created differently but are also united in Christ.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

This is such a clear image of what the body of Christ is and how the church is to work together. Paul goes on to explain in more detail. For example, the eye doesn't make up the whole body, and it can't say to the hand that it doesn't need it. He says God has put the body together that there should be no division in the body—all parts should have equal concern for one another. If one part suffers, all parts suffer, and if one part is honored, every part rejoices. I know it's an overused phrase, but we are better together—when we share the same purpose and goal.

The early church is a beautiful example of this. Luke records in chapter 2 the unity this body of believers experienced.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

The unity and love between the early Christians were evident to all. The way they treated one another, prayed for one another, enjoyed meals together, and worshipped God was a witness to others of the gospel of Christ. And because of this, the Lord increased their numbers. More people were drawn to Christ because of the evident love between the believers. What an encouragement to me.

How can you and I show this love and unity? I think the same way the early church did. We can care for others, pray with and for others, worship together, and so much more. Even at work we can show this kind of unity, by caring for our coworkers and praying for them.

Day Three

The Psalmist writes: *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity (Psalm 133:1)*! How good and pleasant it is to be in unity with others. But that's not always how life works—especially at our jobs.

Just as unity is important in your relationship with Christ and fellow believers, it's also important in your workplace. Teams that have a common and shared goal will work together to reach the goal.

A Teamraderie article cites unity at work is important because research shows approximately 70% of employees believe poor collaboration is decreasing their productivity.¹

If you're concerned about productivity and the bottom line, that's a lot of unproductive time spent because of disunity or poor collaboration.

The article goes on to report nearly two-thirds of the respondents (64%) claim poor collaboration is costing them at least three hours per week in productivity, with 20% claiming they are wasting as many as six hours per week.

¹ Teamraderie Editorial Team. (2024, August 9). A Guide to Achieving Unity in the Workplace. Teamraderie. <http://teamraderie.com/insights/unity-in-the-workplace/>

If you are a manager or an owner or project leader, then communicating the goal and purpose clearly is a priority. Taking time and effort to make sure you listen and understand obstacles and concerns is important. Then get that message across to ensure everyone is on the same page with the mission of the project or the company. It takes time and energy to do this, but the resulting benefits should prove to be worth it.

An encouraging environment with good collaboration starts with being open to others' concerns, communicating ideas and processes clearly, and showing respect. Even if you're not the manager or in charge, your respectful attitude and willingness to listen can go a long way in building unity within the workplace.

How do you handle disagreements though?

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel (Proverbs 15:18).

Being gentle and patient in response to a disagreement will help navigate the conversation. Ask questions if you are not clear on something. Remain calm and listen to what's being said as opposed to what your response will be.

Give yourself time to respond. It's okay to say, "I need to think about this," or "Let me give it some thought, and I'll get back to you." This shows you're taking the other person seriously and considering their perspective. It doesn't mean you have to agree just to avoid conflict—that's not helpful either. But it also means not dismissing his or her ideas right away. Remember the Golden Rule: treat others the way you want to be treated.

Day Four

I recently read a 2021 Harvard Business Review article about high performing teams. The article reported "disagreements with people whose opinions or ideas differ from our own are common in the workplace. When handled appropriately, disagreements lead to better results—but they are not usually viewed that way."²

So true! Different ideas or ways of doing things can lead to better results, but so often the response is defensive or territorial, not willing to listen or change. But if handled in the right way, disagreements can lead to a great outcome. An example is the disagreement between the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and their disagreement on who should accompany them on their second missionary journey.

John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first journey as a helper (Act 13:5). It was quite the journey of incredible growth for the church but also much persecution.

Sometime later, Paul suggested to Barnabas to visit the churches they had planted. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark with them again on this journey, but Paul disagreed because John Mark had not *continued with them in the work* on their first journey (Acts 15:38). In fact, it's written that they had a *sharp disagreement*, and it was so intense they could not come to an agreement at that time, which resulted in Paul taking Silas with him and Barnabas brought John Mark on a separate missionary journey.

² Harvard Business Review High-Performing Teams Start with a Culture of Shared Values by Greg Satell and Cathy Winschitl, May 11, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/05/high-performing-teams-start-with-a-culture-of-shared-values>

But this is not the end of the story. Paul, when he was in Rome, wrote to the Colossians and in Philemon—mentions John Mark sends his greetings along with others. John Mark is with Paul in Rome.

And in Second Timothy Paul writes:

Get (John) Mark and bring him with you for he is very useful to me for ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

Don't you love that? It's estimated 15 plus years have passed since that first journey when John Mark left them. And now, with time, space, maturity, and perspective, there's evidence of reconciliation and working together for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas had a different view of how to conduct the second journey. And so that second journey did not continue on as originally planned, but in the end, two teams went out to encourage the churches and preach Christ to the unreached. A disagreement ended with two different ways of moving forward. Unity was evident—both wanted to encourage and spread the good news. The methods were different, but the mission—the goal—was the same.

Day Five

I've been talking about the importance of unity—not just with fellow believers, but also with our coworkers.

Today's workplace looks different than it used to. Some people work remotely, some in the office, and others split their time between both. Each setup has its benefits, but they also come with unique challenges—especially when it comes to staying connected.

How do we stay on the same page and remain unified in our purpose and mission when we're not all in the same physical space?

It takes intentional effort. Hopefully, your workplace provides tools like messaging apps or video conferencing to help you communicate regularly. But staying connected may also mean being more proactive—since those informal “water cooler” conversations don't happen as naturally.

Here are a few suggestions for maintaining unity in a diverse working environment:

1. **Practice overcommunication.** Even in in-person settings, this is often overlooked. Many times, I think I've communicated clearly, only to realize later it wasn't understood as intended. When you have a conversation—whether by phone or video—follow up with an email to summarize key points. And before you hit send on any message, re-read it. What seems clear to you may need a little fine-tuning for someone else to fully grasp.
2. **Schedule regular video check-ins.** Whether it's with your whole team or one-on-one, set up consistent meetings. These touchpoints help move projects forward, provide space for clarification, and keep relationships strong. If you can occasionally meet in person, even better.
3. **Build trust and personal connections.** Social connection matters. Not just for morale but for productivity too. When people trust each other and feel valued, they collaborate better and bring fresh, creative ideas to the table.

Ultimately, unity comes when everyone understands the goal and the reason behind it. A shared sense of purpose fuels effective teamwork.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18).

And let's not forget: In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.