

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

Unshakeable Unity

INTRODUCTION

Jesus prayed that everyone who believed in Him would be united with each other so that we would be 'one' (John 17:20-23). The past two years have brought division rather than unity, resulting in the destruction of many relationships within families, community groups, friendships, etc. What does Jesus mean when He says we are to be one in Him, and why is this important?

The early Christians were the first multi-ethnic religion. Historically, religions were aligned to an ethnic group, but Christians believe that Jesus is the Savior of everyone in the entire world. When we believe in Him we are changed and view everyone without discrimination, putting aside personal preferences and thinking about our community of believers as one big family. The following four points help us to understand what is meant by 'living in unity' in the church.

Sharing our possessions - Acts 4:32-35

The early believers were not greedy, stingy or self-centered. When we accept Christ, we realize that everything we have is from Him, and we look for ways to share and give, in order to help those in need. This can look like providing meals, clothing, appliances, helping with financial issues, sharing our homes, helping with paint and repairs to homes, etc.

Sharing our problems - Ephesians 4:1-2

Our culture pressures us to be self-reliant, stoic and we may even feel we have to *pretend in Church*, that we have our lives 'together'. When we are willing to share our struggles, we encourage others to share their struggles with us. Everyone has challenges and we need to support each.

Sharing the truth in love - Ephesians 4:15

It's difficult and takes courage to confront others, but speaking the truth helps our community to continue growing closer. We cannot see things such as flaws in our attitudes, beliefs, conduct, etc., and until we're made aware of this, we cannot change and grow. We need to empower our community to speak the truth to us, so that we all mature in Christ.

Sharing our failures - James 5:16

Our culture tends to 'cancel' people when they fail. Sometimes we do this within our Christian communities. Ironically, the Bible is filled with people who fail and yet are used by God. Two of the greatest figures of the early Church, Peter and Paul, experienced failure. We have all failed in one way or another, falling short of the glory of God. We should not wallow in our failures, but share them with others, and pray for healing for everyone. A Christian community that acknowledges and confesses failure can, with support and accountability, be restored and transformed.

Why does being 'one' as the church matter? Jesus' reputation and honour is bound to His Church. When we function as a unified and loving community, people who see this will believe the claims about Jesus. We pray that our Church will show the love of Jesus to the world, thereby bringing them to join us in Unshakeable Unity with Him.

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Where do you see unity today? What would you say is one of the biggest obstacles to people being unified?
2. Tell of a time when you experienced a felt sense of unity, respect and acceptance? E.g. on a sports team, work project, during an activity with family or friends, etc. What was the result?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read John 17:20-23

3. How does Jesus describe the relationship He has with His Father? How can this be a model of unity that overcomes the worldly differences of race, ethnicity, culture, and traditions?

Read Acts 4:32-35

4. In what ways was 'oneness' displayed? Discuss the importance of the relationship between their oneness and God's presence.

Read Ephesians 4:1-2, 15

5. How would you define 'bearing with one another', and 'speaking the truth in love'? How do these relate to being unified, and to collective maturity?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

6. How important to you is unity with other believers? With whom do you share this unity? Where may you need to be more deliberate in being an integral part of the body of Christ?
7. Sharing our burdens and failures with one another, or even challenging one another, can be difficult. What holds you back from doing this? Pray with one another for the courage and trust to open up with one another, and to whom.

THE WORD (NIV)

John 17:20-23

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 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. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 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.

Acts 4:32-35

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

Ephesians 4:1-2, 15

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Jesus' reputation and honor is bound to the unity of His church. Prayerfully consider what role you may play to help others come to believe in Jesus by the way you live and love other Christians?