



I AM A CHURCH MEMBER
MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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2024 Theme: “Let’s “BE” The Church” (2nd Corinthians 6:16; Matthew 5:14 – 16)

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Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference

Chapter 2 Review – I Will Be a Unifying Church Member

In this session, we will see that Scripture emphasizes that church members have a responsibility to create and maintain unity within the church. We will discuss the various ways to create and maintain unity as well as concerns that threaten unity within the church. Ultimately, unity in the church will impact the culture around us. Rainer wrote: “God desires for Christians to get along. In fact, He is emphatic about it. Jesus was clear when He said: ‘By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another’ (John 13:35). Did you get that? The world will know if we are Christians or not by the way we who are believers act toward one another.”

1. That Thing Called Unity

Most of us have been involved in churches where, at some point in time, unity was not present. It may have been during a church split or a business meeting but we have seen fellow believers act like...well, let’s just say they weren’t acting like Jesus! This breaks the very heart of God because His church should be characterized by love and unity.

One of the greatest pictures of unity in the church can be found in the book of Ephesians. Consider Paul’s words in Ephesians 1:15 - 16:

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers...

Churches can be known for many things but we see in this passage that the church in Ephesus was characterized by love and unity. In fact, Paul wrote that their “faith in the Lord Jesus” and their “love for all the saints” was being talked about all over. The love and unity in the church was so extraordinary that people could not help but talk about it!

Rainer wrote: “You have a responsibility as a church member. You are to be a source of unity. You are never to be a divisive force. You are to love your fellow church members unconditionally. And while that doesn’t mean you agree with everyone all the time, it does mean you are willing to sacrifice your own preferences to keep unity in the church.”

2. Gossip & Negative Talk Will Destroy Unity In The Church

It is clear that unity is important in the church but we must be acutely aware of how unity can be destroyed in the church. In the same way that cancer will destroy the physical body, gossip and negative talk will destroy the church if left unchecked. Is gossip really that big of a deal? Consider the various sins Paul outlines in Romans 1:29-31:

²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

The context of these verses focuses on what happens when people refuse to worship God as their Creator and instead worship themselves. Paul identifies a pretty nasty list of sins that will characterize people who fail to worship God as their Creator. We must never lose sight of the seriousness of the sins of gossip and slander! Both will destroy the church if they are not dealt with appropriately.

Rainer wrote: “This chapter is about unity. And few things can destroy the unity of a church like gossip. A unified church is powerful. Gossip tears apart that unity and renders a church powerless.” We must deal with the issue of gossip in the church and Rainer offers two helpful responses:

1. “Don’t be a source of gossip. If you have any doubt whether something is gossip or not, don’t mention it. Keep your tongue under control.”
2. “If someone in the church begins to share gossip with you, gently rebuke him or her. You don’t have to be harsh in your response to them. Kindly say that you would rather not hear any gossip and you would hope it wouldn’t continue to spread.”

It is easy to overlook gossip and slander in the church but we must realize the cost of doing nothing. Consider James’ words to the believers in James 3:6:

⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

3. Forgiveness Will Foster Unity In The Church

Unity can be destroyed easily by gossip in the church but forgiveness will foster unity in the church. Every person living on this planet has experienced hurt in some capacity. It is even possible that this hurt has come at the hands of fellow believers and even fellow church members. So what does forgiveness have to do with unity in the church? Paul gives us some perspective in Colossians 3:12-13:

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Forgiveness is a central component of believers living in harmony with one another in the local church. In fact, the way we forgive says something about the way we understand our own forgiveness.

Rainer wrote:

“Each local church is made up of imperfect members and imperfect pastors. We will make mistakes. We will all sin. Yes, we are all hypocrites. Church unity is torn apart when members refuse to forgive, when any member is too prideful to grant forgiveness. Remember, Christ loved us so much that He died on a cross to forgive us. And now, as He has forgiven us, so we must forgive others. It is essential to the unity of your church.”

Forgiveness is not the absence of consequences but the restoration of a relationship.

Unity is vital to the _____ of the church. It is critically important.
_____ church member must contribute to the unity of the church.

The two topics mentioned in this chapter that are destructive to unity in the church are _____ and _____.

A unified church is powerful. _____ tears apart that unity and renders a church _____.

Unity in the church will not happen if members have _____. Church unity is torn apart when members refuse to forgive, when any member is too prideful to grant forgiveness.

Homework for Next Week

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8

Place the word listed below with the corresponding scripture.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|------|---|
| 1. | C _____ | Love | - 13:4a "suffers long" |
| 2. | C _____ | Love | - 13:4b "kind" |
| 3. | Candid | Love | - 13:4c "does not envy" |
| 4. | C _____ | Love | - 13:4d "not parade itself, is not puffed up" |
| 5. | C _____ | Love | - 13:5a "does not behave rudely" |
| 6. | C _____ | Love | - 13:5b "not seek its own" |
| 7. | C _____ | Love | - 13:5c "is not provoked" |
| 8. | C _____ | Love | - 13:5d "thinks no evil" |
| 9. | C _____ | Love | - 13:6 |
| 10. | C _____ | Love | - 13:7a "bears all things" |
| 11. | C _____ | Love | - 13:7b "believes all things" |
| 12. | C _____ | Love | - 13:7c "hopes all things" |
| 13. | C _____ | Love | - 13:7d "endures all things" |
| 14. | C _____ | Love | - 13:8a "never fails" |

Compassionate

Constrained

Contemplating

Constant

Continuing

Confident

Comforting

Calm

Courteous

Crucified

Coping

Costly

Composed

Candid