

The Dynamics of Spiritual Maturity: **The Diversity of Unity**

- * What is your favorite vegetable?
- * Who is your favorite football team?
- * What is your favorite sport?
- * Now apply all of these differences to something much more important:
Your Faith!!!!
- * You may think that these comparisons are trivial and do not apply.....
but you would be wrong!!!!
- * The Body of Christ within any local church is like a stew! When a bowl of
stew is set before you, you can recognize it as stew. You can also still
recognize each individual vegetable separately that make up the stew!
- * We make up the Body of Christ and a local church together, but we still
bring to the group our own unique talents, gifts and desires!
- * The question often approached in scripture is how do we co-exist
in the diversity of unity!

I. Unity is “of the Spirit!”

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

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. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

A. Paul is explicitly saying that our redemption is provided from
the same source! Applied the same way! Lived out the same way!

1. Unity is not a general spirit of friendliness or camaraderie!
2. Unity is a product of the working of The Spirit!
3. It is ONLY SAMENESS in that it is of ONE FAITH, ONE LORD
AND ONE BAPTISM INTO ONE LIFE OF ONE GOD!
4. The rest of our faith is seen in diversity!!!!!!!!!!

B. Notice one of the analogies that Paul uses about the Body of Christ
is our own human body!!

1. He uses this as he speaks of gifts and ways to minister and

our interaction with one another.

2. How have we missed that The Church is also called Body of Christ!
3. The hands, feet, eyes, noses, ears, legs, mouths, kidneys, spleens and medulla oblongata!!
4. In other words, the body has great diversity and function!!!!

C. Our great challenge is in the recognition of this diversity and realizing and admitting as to what really matters!

II. All of this starts with my very personal salvation/redemption experience with Jesus Christ!! Am I following Christianity or the Risen Christ???

A. Individual Maturity in my faith enhances and enables my broader relationships in the Body of Christ!

1. My salvation and redemption are a super natural experience:

Ephesians 1:3-9 (NIV)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's Grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

2. I must realize that it's not about me:

Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

3. Yes, life can be tough at times:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

4. I must press in and strain to be who I am in Christ:

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

5. I am a part of something bigger than me:

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV)

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

B. Now the question becomes: Does certain scriptures negate others or do we somehow accept and live out them all????

1. For instances:

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

2. What about:

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

3. HOW do we successfully and accurately put all this together!

III. Paul exposes issues and reveals some of the answers! He isn't shy about it either!

A. We often hear said, "We want to be like the Early Church!" That should be our goal and what we aspire to! Really????

1. Most all of the letters and epistles were written to instruct and correct the early church!
2. Rather letting them be our standard, lets allow the letters written to them be our instruction as well!!

B. Paul speaks of division and lack of cooperation!

1 Corinthians 1:10-17 (NIV)

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1. The question here is: what does it mean to agree in what you say and be united in mind and thought?
2. Is Paul actually saying that the "True Church" has to agree on everything? That really narrows things down!
3. Not even husbands and wives agree on things of faith!
4. No one congregation has the same ideas about everything!

C. While looking at context and other things in the letters to Corinth and Ephesus, Paul revealed his answer pretty openly!

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NIV)

4 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. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1. Diversity requires humility, gentleness and patience!
2. It takes effort to exist in peace!

