

Acts 08 - **Real Unity – Acts 4:32-35**

From **Acts 4:32** - thru **Acts 5:11**
is really **ONE message** of **Contrast**

& I **initially tried** to prepare it as **ONE** msg
in order to show the **stark contrast** in this text

But there is **SO MUCH** good (& important) stuff in **BOTH** sides
of the contrast - - I decided to make it TWO Messages

So - **THIS message** goes **WITH** the Next Msg (Prob called “Live Real”)

Today we’re going to see **what it looks like** when the Church
really has the **Life of Christ Ruling & Reigning** in them

Next week - we’ll see **what it looks like** - when we **DON’T**
(so - - *stay tuned*)

The growth of the early church was **Incredible**

& we **often say** - a **big reason** for the incredible **growth**
was **the persecution** the church experienced (& it’s true)

Persecution & Difficulty

will **always** brings **spiritual growth** – if we’ll allow it

Persecution is what caused the “**Spread**” of the church for sure

But there was **something else** that caused
the **Incredible Growth** of the church - - **FROM THE INSIDE**

There was “**Miraculous Life**” growing **INSIDE** the church

It was "Set in motion" by Jesus Christ - & in fact
it was HIS life Miraculously GROWING - INSIDE the Church

& so – I think there are TWO questions that need to be answered
about this Miraculous Growth INSIDE the Church

- 1) WHAT did it LOOK like ?
- 2) CAN we see the SAME THING today?

Those are our TWO Questions today

- 1) WHAT did the "Miraculous Life" of Christ look like in the church?
- 2) CAN we see the SAME THING today?

Let's Pray

Let me give you some "Hints" before we dive into the text
about what this "Miraculous Life" of Christ,
growing INSIDE the church - looked like

Write these Vs's in your margin by our Text in Acts 4 today

Hint # 1 - - John 17:20–23 (ESV)

*20 "I do not ask for these only (the original disciples), but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,
23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

There's **HINT # 1** - (pretty easy)

Hint # 2 - is in **Jn Ch 13** - where Jesus First **Demonstrated**
a **New Command** to His Disciple's - By First - **Washing their Feet**

& then He said something **so Incredible** – & **so Powerful**
it is the **2nd** Miraculous **SIGN** - of the **Life of Christ IN** the Church

John 13:34–35 (esv)

***34 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.***

***35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you
have love for one another.”***

They will know we are Christians

By Our **Love** - For **One Another** !!

& then **Col 3:12-17** (write that down) Explains what it “Looks Like”
when we're **Putting on Christ** “In the Church”

& Finally **Eph Ch's 4-5-6** (write) - **Spell out** in Great Detail
exactly **what** we **see** in **SUMMARY** in our Text today

Please - **Write this four references** down - & **Study** them

Ask the **Holy Spirit** **DAILY**

to **Transform you** - in your **Relationship** with others in the Church

Because it was **the way** that

Believers treated **ONE ANOTHER** in the Church

That **caused** such **Supernatural Growth** - **from the INSIDE**

Jesus Christ gave His life for the church

& then He called His Followers to do the same - & they DID

& what I really we SEE - as we read this short section ins Acts 4

Is the “Summarized Description” of what it looks like –

when Christians are LIVING the Life of Christ - IN the church

Watch closely - because THIS is how the church can see

Miraculous - Supernatural - Spiritual Growth - From the INSIDE

Acts 4:32(a) (esv)

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, . . .

The Paraphrase THE MESSAGE writes V.32 this way

32 The whole congregation of believers was united as one—one heart, one mind! . . .

That’s interesting - because THAT is exactly

what Jesus Prayed for in Jn 17

& in His prayer Jesus said - “*so that the world may believe*”

Jesus’ prayer for Unity was Coming TRUE

& the World was BELIEVING

Acts 4:32 says 1st - the believers were of ONE HEART

Unity of the Heart

The word “Heart” refers to

the very core – the wellspring of our being

it refers to who we REALLY are – at the center of our being

Luke is saying - the believers were UNITED
at the very core of their being

Down deep – where it's real
They were BOUND together - - they were ONE

This Unity is at the CORE – NOT at the surface

& this Supernatural Unity – at the very CORE of who we are
is the beginning of what made the church explode
from the INSIDE !!

& then v.32 says – they were of One SOUL

the word for soul is PSU-KAY (Psyche)
it means - ALL of who we are – what we're Made UP of

It may be Best Defined as a combination of
our MIND – our EMOTIONS – & our WILL (choices)
It's what makes us who we are

& this – to me – is the Really Miraculous Unity

Because there had just been thousands saved
in Acts Ch 2 - & again in Acts Ch 3

People from all over the place were getting saved
there are people from a DOZEN diff countries listed in Acts Ch 2

So you KNOW they all have different ways
of thinking about things - & of feeling about things

But **BY** the **life of Christ** in them – they were now **UNITED** at the **core** of who they are

But listen guys – it **would** be **crazy** to think they **all of a sudden** all started **dressing** the same,
all started **looking** the same,
all started **acting** the same

these believers were from all **different cultures** & **lands** –
there had to be **great diversity** in them

They ate **different food** – wore **different clothes** –
spoke **different languages** - & had **different cultures**

But they were **UNITED** by Jesus Christ **living in them**

The shared **Life of Christ** connected them
on a **level far deeper** than *Religious Uniformity*

They had become **ONE BODY** – made up of many **Different PARTS**

The **lessons** about the **Body of Christ** - in **1Cor 12**
are **NOT** just about the **Diversity** inside our **ONE** Church
It's about the **DIVERSITY** in **ALL** the **Body** of Christ

What we **need to understand** here
is that this is **NOT** a Picture of Uniformity !!

Uniformity is when we say **everyone** has to
look like us, & **talk** like us, & **act** like us

that is **NOT** what this **was**

In fact – **ONE** of the **MOST DIS-UNIFYING** & damaging things that **can happen** in the church . . .

is when we **IMPLY** that everyone has to **LOOK** and/or **ACT** like **US**

That is UNIFORMITY - - NOT UNITY

It's the **Result** of Man's Religion

It's **Best Exemplified** by the Pharisees

& **Something** we should be very Afraid of

The N.T church had **UNITY - IN - DIVERSITY**

& their **UNITY** was based on the **LIFE of Jesus Christ** in them

& the **Life of Christ** *Connected* them – *United* them at the **very CORE** of their being

Now - I'm **NOT** implying that **TRUE DOCTRINE** is **NOT essential** to our **UNITY** - it **IS** !!

But it is the **Essential Doctrines** that are **Essential** - - which would be **the Doctrines** re: **WHO** Jesus Christ is

Too often the church calls things **DOCTRINES** that are **FAR** from **essential**

STUDY ROM CH 14 - Really . . .

If you have a tendency to **DISPUTE NON-ESSENTIAL** things - **PLEASE** - - - **STOP IT**

The Devil DOESN'T need your help
Driving people away from the church (*he's doing ok on his own*)

This Miraculous UNITY summarized in Acts Ch 4
is the great Unity of the Heart & Soul

It's at the CORE of who we are – NOT on the surface

& it causes Supernatural, Spiritual Growth
FROM WITHIN the Church

Psalm 133:1–3 (esv)

1 Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

3 It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Does everyone have to LOOK & ACT like you - - NO

Do we need to be UNITED at the Very CORE of who we are - YES !!

OK - Continuing - - - The 2nd Half of V.32
is the Natural OUTCOME of the 1st Half

Acts 4:32 (esv)

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

Alright - Let's clear one thing up here right away

This was **NOT** a **POLICY**, & **NOT** a **REQUIREMENT**

This was **NOT Communal Living** - it was **NOT COMMUNISM**

This was a **Reflection** of the **Believers**
Identification & **Unity** & **Concern** for One Another

Again - the Paraphrase **THE MESSAGE** says here

“No one said, “That’s mine; you can’t have it.” They shared everything.

The **important thing** to see here is

This was an **ATTITUDE** - **Not** a **Political Policy**

& it **came out** of the **UNITY** in the **1st half of the Vs**

To **see** how this **worked out** - Let's **skip V.33** (we'll come back)
& **read** Acts 4:34-35

Acts 4:34-35 (esv)

34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold

35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Again - this was **NOT Early Communism**
(where everyone had **EQUAL** Everything)

This is an **Expression** of the deep **Concern & Caring**
that **the church** had for one another

It's also **NOT** saying that **EVERYONE** who Owned **Land** or **Houses**
Sold them - or **was required** to sell them

The NIV captures it correctly - Acts 4:34 (NIV)

34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales

35 . . . and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Again, **not a requirement**, but a **Willingness** - A **Desire** - **TO GIVE**

This is a **tangible illustration** of the **love & concern**
the **church had** for one another

The picture here - is of **Sacrificial GIVING**

It's an **acknowledgement** that what **Christian's** have - **is the LORD'S**

As Christians - **ALL we have** belongs to **the LORD**
& **He gives it** to us - For **other's GOOD** - & for **His GLORY**

Guys - - **GIVING** – *Sacrificial Giving*
is **such** a **HUGE part** of **Jesus Christ** being our **LORD**

I promise you – I **see** the **TRANSFORMATION** of a Christian
when **they finally** come to **GRIPS** with this

**When a Christian finally Acknowledges
that Jesus is LORD of their MONEY TOO**

You can easily see a **Radical Transformation** in their lives
& they **truly begin** to be **used by God** in this area

& **their testimonies** are often very **similar** . . .

We finally decided to **surrender** control of our money **to the Lord**

We **finally decided** to let Him be **Lord of ALL**, including our **money**
& we **asked Him** to begin **USING US** in that area

& they almost always end up saying;

This has been the **GREATEST BLESSING** of our Christian Life
we are so **blessed** by **Giving** to the Lord
we will **NEVER stop**

They become like the **Macedonian** church

that **BEGGED Paul** for the **Privilege** of **GIVING Sacrificially**
to the **other believers**

2 Corinthians 8:1–5 (NLT)

1 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia.

2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will.

4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.

5 They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

When we learn that Sacrificial Giving is one of the Greatest JOYS of the Christian Life

It will **become** such a **part** of our **Christian Lifestyle** that we'll **never stop** giving **whether** we have **plenty** - or whether we have **little**

Never Forget the WIDOW'S OFFERING in Mark Ch 12 & read it - if you're not familiar with it

Sacrificial GIVING is a tangible part of our UNITY – we SEE a need - & we're ANXIOUS to meet that need

We **desire** to be **PART** of **God's provision** to **others** in the body

& **ACTUALLY** - Our **Giving** Only **STARTS** - with our **Money**

There's **something** really **COOL** about **one word** back up in **V.32**

it's the Word - **EVERYTHING**
Acts 4:32 . . . they had everything in common

This word **EVERYTHING** is **NOT** Restricted to **FINANCIAL** / **MATERIAL** things

NKJV says - ***they had ALL THINGS in common***

& actually - **Material sharing** was just the **tip** of the **iceberg**

These believers shared **ALL THINGS !!**
meaning the **Shared** their **LIFE** with one another

This is a picture - of **TRUE KOINONIA**

It wasn't JUST sharing MATERIAL Needs

They were **Bearing** one another's **Burdens**,
Caring for one another
Sacrificing time and effort to **Comfort** one another

& I'll tell you – we've **REALLY seen this** here in **this body**
& **we** are so **incredibly blessed** by it

You guys are the most **CARING** - & **CONCERNED** - & **COMMITTED**
Group of Believers - we've **ever had** in this church

We **REALLY** are **seeing something different** happening around here

As you know - in the **past few weeks**

My family has had some **Extreme JOY** & **Extreme SORROW**
at the very **same time**

We've been under **Tremendous Stress** - & **stretched** very thin

& **we've had** so **many people GIVE** of themselves to us;
their **heart**, their **compassion**, their **concern**, their **ministry**,
their **time**, their **cooking**, & their **money** (for emerg trip to OR)

It has been incredibly **heartwarming**
& very, very **spiritually encouraging**

It just **screams out** the name of **Jesus** - as the body
sacrifices & **gives** - to **Strengthen & Care** for one another

It's the **Real Deal** – & it is because **our hearts** are **UNITED**
by the **Life of Christ** in each us

& **because** we desire to share **ALL things**
including our **Joys** & our **Sorrows** – our **Victories** & our **Struggles**

& guys - this Level of **KOINONIA**
ALWAYS involves **SACRIFICIAL GIVING** in some way

& so - **THANK YOU** - from all **my family** - to you

You know - **I was sharing my heart** on this to a brother here

& **he said** - he thought our **commitment**
to **MAKING DISCIPLES** in SMALL Groups

was a **big part** of the **Reason** we're **seeing** such a **change** here

It **HAS** been incredible to see **the Transformation**
in **those** who are **committed** to a **small Discipleship Groups**

I've been so **blown away** by the **commitment** to the **FIRE-TEAMS**
that **God placed** the **men in** up at the Retreat

You guys are **DOING IT** - & it **SHOWS**

& **the guys** who are committed to those **4-Man Discipleship Teams**
are already **seeing** substantial **changes** in their **walk** with the Lord

I strongly **URGE** Every One of you
who desires to be a **Disciple** of Jesus Christ . . .

GET a **DISCIPLER** !! - Make sure you have
an **INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIP** with another Believer or 2

Where you can **BE held up** - & learn to **HOLD others up**

Where you can learn to **BE a Disciple**, & learn to **MAKE Disciples**

& **as God Transforms** us - as we are learning
to **BE Disciples**, & **MAKE Disciples** . . .

As God Transforms us;

He will **UNITE** our **Hearts & Souls** Together
& we will be able to **Share Life together** . . .

in **True KOINONIA** - - In **REAL UNITY**

& **when** that **happens** - our **WITNESS** to the World
will be **UNSTOPPABLE**

& God's **GREAT GRACE** will flow **UPON** us
& **THRU** us - upon those around us

Let's **go back up** & catch **the Vs** we missed

Acts 4:33 (esv)

33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

& **THAT** - is what it is **REALLY all About !!**

It's about us being able to give our Testimony
to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus - with GREAT POWER

& it's about being in a place where God's Great Grace FLOWS
upon us - & thru us

& the Environment where THAT happens
is the Environment - of REAL Unity!

I really want to encourage you today

Get yourself into a small Discipleship Group
that is patterned after what we've seen here

We are Called to this REAL UNITY as the entire church

But PRACTICALLY - this works out in Small Discipleship Groups

Where you can be REALLY UNITED in Heart & Mind
& where you SHARE LIFE together

& it is the UNITY in those CORE Discipleship Groups
that can BRING REAL UNITY to the entire church

& if you need help getting into a discipling relationship like that
you fill out the slip on your bulletin, & drop it in the box

Let's Pray

QUOTE FROM R. KENT HUGHES - When the church is great, there is a greatness in unity. As believers' hearts beat together in spiritual oneness, their fellowship of soul puts their common focus upon Christ. And when the world sees such great unity, it is impacted by the grace flowing from the church—great grace. There is also great power. People come to believe because they see resurrection life in the church. And when the church is like this, there is great care as its people expend their lives to help one another. How beautiful!¹

Hughes, R. K. (1996). *Acts : The church afire*. Preaching the Word (73). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.