



THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY GOES BROAD | FEBRUARY 8, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Being a _____ is more fundamental to your identity than your family, your ethnicity, your profession, your nationality, your personality — or any other way this world defines identity. And so the unity you share with every Christian supersedes every other bond.

That means that wherever gospel people exist, diversity should as well, as it grows naturally from the gospel. Diversity is the grand _____ to the truth of the gospel (Ephesians 3:10).

Yet, at the same time, diversity may be less important than you've thought — because it's not an end in itself. Diversity is the effect, not the the substance. It's the thermometer, not the thermostat. It matters to the extent that it advertises a _____ reality of gospel unity.

THE PURPOSE OF DIVERSITY

What is it about unity in God's family that makes even "the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" take notice? It is the degree of _____ between Jew and Gentile before Christ — a separation that Paul in Ephesians 2:14 calls "a diving wall of hostility."

Unity between these two groups would take a _____, which is exactly what Paul prays for in Ephesians 3:14-19 — He prays for God to do the impossible. Fittingly, Paul acknowledges that the Triune God is able to accomplish such requests (Ephesians 3:20-21).

So what is the "eternal purpose" of diversity in your own local church? To show off the _____ of the cross. Our strength — our ability to showcase supernatural gospel power — is our diversity. Yet without unity, that diversity is merely context for discord that defames Christ.

WHAT DIVERSITY MATTERS?

If by diversity we only ever mean _____ diversity, we're missing the main message of Ephesians 3. After all, not every region of the world has ethnic diversity. Diversity covers any multiplicity of backgrounds where unity is possible only through the gospel.

1. Boundaries of _____

"_____ " has become a common word in the church for a good reason: it's not something that we often see in the world.

2. Boundaries of _____

James castigates the church's preferential treatment of the _____ in James 2:8-9.

3. Boundaries of _____ ability

Do socially awkward people describe your church as a refuge? Or do they find it as cold and impersonal as the world outside? Social ability is no barrier to true fellowship in the Spirit.

4. Boundaries of _____ background

Some degree of _____ is necessary to have a church composed of Christians from suburban, rural, and urban backgrounds; liturgical, Pentecostal, and other religious traditions.

DIVERSITY (SHOULD BE) INEVITABLE

What must we do to create unity and diversity in our own churches? _____. God has already done it (Ephesians 2-3). We must, however, work hard to live it out.

As heat radiates inevitably from a fire, unity in diversity flows inexorably from the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing for us to *do* here; our role is merely to watch. And then to _____ as God does the impossible in the community of the local church.

But does this mean that we should sit back and expect people with all different personalities and backgrounds to love each other automatically? Not at all. Paul tells the Ephesian believers to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3). Live as you _____ in Christ!

We have a role to play in cultivating community. Like a farmer carefully watering a plant, we recognize that we’re not the ones who give the plant of our unity its life. Yet we also recognize that in God’s providence, what we _____ matters tremendously to keeping it healthy.

TWO IMPEDIMENTS TO GOSPEL UNITY AND DIVERSITY

1. Ministry by _____

We often don’t believe the gospel can actually unite such a broad diversity of Christians. So we take what feels like an easier path to community: we clump people based on _____. Age-based groupings, marital-status-based groupings, style-of-music-based groupings, etc.

When we do this, we certainly create a kind of community — that is, people living life together and enjoying fellowship together. But this community hardly provokes the world’s attention because the bond beneath it is _____ similarity rather than the gospel.

If you’ve constructed your community such that visitors and members would describe most of it as _____-based community, then you’ve undershot the vision of Ephesians 2 and 3.

2. _____

In our consumerist age, we often assume diversity will happen without sacrifice. For example, what style of music will we use in our worship services? Some churches have responded to this question by segmenting their church into multiple services based on musical style. This feeds right into a consumerist mentality that favors individual _____ over gospel unity.

Instead, we should consider how we can sacrifice our comfort, preferences, resources, time, and habits for the good of _____ in our church.