



THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY
DISCONTENTMENT IN THE CHURCH | MARCH 8, 2026

INTRODUCTION

In God's wisdom, He has left the task of displaying the glory of His perfect character to the very _____ people of His church.

So often, threats to church unity don't come from _____ against one another, but disappointed expectations and perceived rejection (Proverbs 13:12). Discontent is inevitable; broken unity is not. So how do we help our churches address this problem?

LEADING THROUGH TIMES OF DISCONTENT

In the book of Acts, just four chapters after Pentecost, _____ threatens the unity of the first church. The way the apostles led is instructive (Acts 6:1-7).

- In Ephesians 3, Paul argues that unity between Jew and Gentile is a glorious demonstration of the _____ of the gospel.
- The Hellenists were Jews who had adapted _____ culture and spoke Greek.
- The Hebrews were Jews who maintained _____ culture and spoke Aramaic.
- The gospel asserts that unity in Christ is stronger than worldly _____.

1. Threats to church unity deserve the _____ of church leaders.

Many in the first century would have dismissed unequal treatment of widows as insignificant. But the issue was significant enough to the apostles that they gathered "the full number of the disciples" to discuss it — which may well have numbered in the _____.

Just think: nearly every Christian on earth was called into that meeting. That's how important widows are, and that's how important church _____ is.

2. But ultimately, it is the _____ job to protect unity.

You might think that because of how important the issue was, the _____ would take charge of things themselves. But they don't. All the apostles do is address the congregation.

Leaders must lead, but protecting unity is ultimately the _____ responsibility. After all, who does Paul urge in Ephesians 4:3 to be "eager to maintain the unity"? The congregation.

3. Be reluctant to take _____.

The apostles seem careful to avoid aligning themselves with either the Hellenist or Hebrew side of the controversy. It doesn't appear that the apostles even attempted to determine if the Hellenist widows *were* being neglected. The mere _____ of favoritism required action.

4. Act in response to _____, structural problems.

Generally, we are wise to _____ patiently to those experiencing challenges with our churches, but we should wait to apply a solution until we see a tangible fix to a tangible problem.

5. Temper expectations for what church _____ can do.

It appears that the goal of the apostles' action was not equality or _____ for all, but the end of favoritism: the avoidance of one group being neglected.

We must take care not to oversell the abilities of church leaders. Leaders can pray that God would ignite real change, teach the congregation of God's priorities in His inspired Word, and address structural issues where they appear. But the problems that most pain us in our congregations are problems of the _____ — and only God can do that work.

6. Put our hope in what the _____ can do through the congregation.

Through a work of God's Spirit, the congregation didn't content themselves with simply meeting the bar the apostles had set for them. They bent over backwards to _____ for their Hellenist sisters by appointing a majority of Hellenistic men.

EQUIPPING PEOPLE TO WEATHER DISCONTENTMENT

Rather than simply waiting until a difficult situation arises, we want to _____ for these difficult times.

1. The _____ of Unity

The idea that unity is good is not news. The problem is that we often don't know why it's good. Unity is valuable because it reflects God's _____ and being (1 Corinthians 1:13). God cares about our unity because it shows off His power and wisdom.

2. Christians Act and Speak as _____, Not Consumers

The New Testament assumes that Christians ask, "How can I serve?" rather than "What's in it for me?" _____ Christians are to hold each other accountable (Matthew 18:15-20). All Christians are to encourage each other in faith (Hebrews 10:23-25). All Christians are to love deeply and sacrificially (Romans 12:1-13).

Spiritual consumers commit to a congregation to the extent that commitment benefits them. Spiritual providers commit because of the benefit they've already received in _____.

3. When to Publicly _____

When the disagreement is both clear (something that nearly everyone in the congregation has historically seen as taught in Scripture) and important (essential to the _____), then getting the right answer is more important than unity. Otherwise, unity is more important.

4. When to _____ a Church

If someone believes he can no longer _____ his church's leaders, he should find a church where he can obey Hebrews 13:17. Your church's job is to shepherd every member to the greenest pastures, even when it means shepherding them into another faithful church.