

ACCIDENTAL PHARISEE

WEEK 7: QUEST FOR UNIFORMITY



How Uniformity Kills Unity

We should be one in Christ because we are Christians. Unity should be a reality:

- The first lack of unity occurred in the garden (Cain & Abel) and was over how to worship God.
- Same battle that has been going on for thousands of years.

We often confuse unity with uniformity – that we all have to look alike:

- Unity doesn't mean we don't disagree or possibly don't like each other.
- Scripture tells us to work diligently to **preserve** unity.

“²⁰I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that 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. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I 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.” – John 17:20-23 ESV

Uniformity is based on clone-like similarities and is different than unity:

- Jesus came to save us in our differences.
- The world notices when we are loving and bearing with one another.
- God delights in our diversity.

Boundary markers:

- Christians often use boundary markers to define unity.
- Our actions, dress code, lifestyle, even the vocabulary we use and the things we emphasize all serve as boundary markers.

We become accidental Pharisees when we lay down boundary markers that are narrower than the ones laid down by Jesus and then treat people who line up on the wrong side of our markers as if they were spiritual imposters or enemies of the Lord.

- Boundary markers that are narrower than Jesus don't protect the flock – they divide the flock.
- They result in a rash of friendly fire.

“If you're a Christian and I'm a Christian, we're one in Christ. We don't have to produce unity. We already have it ... our biblical unity is rooted solely in our relationship with Jesus.”

– Larry Osborne

Theological Uniformity Undercuts the Bible

The more we pursue Theological uniformity, the more the Bible takes a back seat. Sometimes the Bible is not even allowed to speak for itself:

- We can be overly influenced by our favorite teacher or pastor.
- Eventually the Bible becomes nothing more than a proof text for what our tribe already believes.
- Theological systems superimpose on the Bible and make passages fit in their system.

Jesus rebuked his disciples for trying to silence a deliverance ministry:

“⁴⁹Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.’ ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.’” -Luke 9:49-50 ESV

- In other words, Jesus is saying the kingdom is way bigger than any of them realized.
- Jesus words to the disciples should blow up our narrow definition of what constitutes an approved ministry.

“No matter how much you’d like it to be, no system is perfect. If you can’t enumerate the problems with your system, deal honestly with the verses that are troubling to your side, and admit that the other side makes some good points, you are probably in danger of being seduced by your system.”

– Dave Miller SBC Voices

Key points:

- God uses people who don’t have it all together.
- “Not of us” doesn’t necessarily mean “not of Him”.
- The core of the gospel is worth fighting for – nuances are not.

Agreeing to Disagree

Some disputes are about passages that do not have indisputable interpretations:

- Scripture is indisputable about living in harmony.
- Scripture is indisputable about not having a quarrelsome spirit.

There is room to disagree if Jesus had Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot in his group of twelve:

- In the natural order of things Matthew and Simon would have hated each other.
- Racial diversity is a good thing. We also need political, theological, and ministry diversity.
- Bearing with one another is an act of selfless obedience.

Many of us do better bearing with non-Christians than we do bearing with our annoying and wrongheaded brothers and sisters in Christ:

- Our meanest and nastiest fights are often with members of the same tribe we belong to.

Hate the sin but love the sinner should apply inside and outside the church:

- We need to live out 1 John 2:9-11

“We should say our piece but then seek the peace. We should try to influence but not inflamm.”

– Larry Osborne

⁹Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” – 1 John 2:9-11 ESV

Discussion Questions:

1. There are some things that are worth fighting for. Which specific issues do you believe should be on that list?
2. How would you rate the diversity of FCOV?
3. Where should FCOV watch to make sure we are not elevating uniformity over unity?

Character of Genuine Saving Faith¹:

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” – 2 Corinthians 13:5

Evidences that neither prove nor disprove one’s faith (List I):

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Visible Morality | Matt 19:16-21, 23:27 |
| 2. Intellectual Knowledge | Rom 1:21, 2:17-24 |
| 3. Religious Involvement | Matt 25:1-10 |
| 4. Active Ministry | Matt 7:21-24 |
| 5. Conviction of Sin | Acts 24:25; 1 John 2:3-6 |
| 6. Assurance | Matt 23 |
| 7. Time of Decision | Luke 8:13-14 |

The fruit/proofs of authentic/true Christianity (List II):

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|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Love for God | Ps 42:1, 73:25; Luke 10:27; Rom 8:7-11 |
| 2. Repentance from Sin | Ps 32:5; Pr 28:13; Rom 7:14; 2 Cor 7:10; 1 John 1:8-10 |
| 3. Genuine Humility | Ps 51:17; Matt 5:1-12; James 4:6-10 |
| 4. Devotion to God’s Glory | Ps 105:3, 115:1; Is 43:7, 48:10-11; Jer 9:23, 1 Cor 10:31 |
| 5. Continual Prayer | Luke 18:1; Eph 6:18; Phil 4:6; 1 Tim 2:1-4; James 5:16-18 |
| 6. Selfless Love | 1 John 2:9-11, 3:14, 4:7-8 |
| 7. Separation from the World | 1 Cor 2:12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17, 5:5 |
| 8. Spiritual Growth | Luke 8:15; John 15:1-6; Eph 4:12-16 |
| 9. Obedient Living | Matt 7:21; John 15:14-17; Rom 16:26; 1 Pet 1:2, 22;
1 John 2:3-5 |

If List I is true of a person and List II is false, there is cause to question the validity of one’s profession of faith. Yet if List II is true, then List I will be also.

¹ MacArthur Study Bible