

MAIN POINT: God's people experience His blessing as they live in unity through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
INTRODUCTORY THOUGHT: One horse can pull 8,000 pounds alone, but when it works together with another horse, it doesn't just double the amount it can pull. Together, two horses can actually pull up to 24,000 pounds—3 times the weight that one can pull alone. There's a great lesson about working together in unity! When God's people interact in unity, especially in their efforts to share the gospel in the church, community, and world, God blesses those efforts.

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 (Psalm 133:1-3).

The psalmist wrote about the blessings of unity and harmony in Psalm 133:1-3. Unity is "good and pleasant," he said. When he and his fellow Israelites lived together in harmony, life was good. Many families today long for unity. Our nation longs for unity. Sometimes churches long for unity. We've all heard the horror stories of "church wars" that take place over the color of the carpet chosen in a building project, or the battle over worship songs and worship style. Satan loves to keep the people of God arguing and battling each other rather than himself, and churches often fall victim to his carefully laid schemes (**Ephesians 6:11**). But when churches discover they can rally around the gospel, many of the things that divide us fade away. The gospel becomes the focal point of our energy and our ministry. The gospel brings unity.

REFLECT:

1. In what ways is unity in a home, a nation, or a church a blessing?
2. What are some of the key reasons we see the breakdown of unity in our churches?
 - **Gossip:** Church members talk about one another instead of talking to one another. Paul calls church members who gossip people "filled with all unrighteousness" (**Romans 1:29**)
 - **Actions cloaked in darkness:** I once heard of a church personnel committee and a few church staff members who worked in darkness to fire a pastor without ever meeting with him first or giving him reasons for his dismissal. Then they refused to respond to church members who were asking questions.
 - **Failure to confront church bullies:** Some church members seek power in a church they can't get elsewhere. They are devious and dangerous. They must be courageously confronted.
 - **Self-serving church members:** Some church members insist on getting their way for everything from worship style to the order of the worship service. Biblical church membership, however, is selfless and more concerned about others.
 - **Lack of prayer:** A church that does not pray together is likely to fragment into special interest groups.
 - **Fear of confrontation:** Too many church members would rather sweep problems under the rug than deal with them.
 - **Adopting the hypercritical spirit of culture:** This reality is especially true in blogs and social media. I've seen many pastors attacked publicly on Twitter and Facebook.
 - **Low expectations:** Many churches have no clear guidelines on what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. If you expect little from members, that's exactly what you'll get. And some of them will use their idle time to gossip, criticize, and tear down.
 - **No church discipline:** Many churches have no process for church discipline.

- **Churches known more for what they are against rather than what they are for:** This negativity becomes pervasive in the congregation and destroys church unity.
 - **Fear of losing members:** Many churches are plagued by a spirit of divisiveness by one or more members. These members go unchallenged because often they are big givers and the church does not want to risk losing them.
 - **Failure to be evangelistic:** It is unlikely that a church member who is evangelistic will be divisive.
 - **Power groups:** Sometimes the bullies in the church get allies to form power groups to cause division within the church.
 - **The silent and fearful majority:** Some church members think that it is not good to know the truth. Such a statement is unbiblical and symptomatic of members, even those in the majority, let evil exist because they are afraid to confront it.
3. How would you know if MTBC is experiencing disunity?
 4. What are the things that should unify MTBC, rather than divide it?
 5. Are there things that are currently dividing us at MTBC?
 6. How does God want you to contribute to the unity of MTBC?
 7. What attitudes, habits, thoughts, or actions do you need to change in order to be an agent of unity at MTBC?
 8. **(John 17:21)** When is the last time you prayed for MTBC? Take a moment to follow Jesus' example in praying for your church family. Pray that we would experience the same unity that Jesus had with God and the Holy Spirit **(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).**
 9. Can you think of a time that you were turned off/pushed away by Christians who were divided? How did it make you feel? What does division among God's people communicate to others about who God is?
 10. Can you think of a time that you experienced unity among God's people? How did it make you feel? What does unity among God's people communicate to others about who God is?
 11. How important is it that we strive to get along now with those with whom we will be spending eternity?
 12. When the church 'lives in unity' what does it look like to us and the watching world?
 13. **(1 Corinthians 13)** God created us for fellowship with one another and with him. That fellowship cannot exist without true Christian love. The Scripture says that the world will know that we are Christ's disciples by our love for one another. How do we define love? **(It must be defined as Scripture defines it, that is, a love which is centered on Christ and promotes the good of the people of Christ. It is not self-serving).**
 14. The group of people you are sitting among in this church is the bride that Christ died for. They are the people that God picked up out of the mud, muck, and mire of sin. He redeemed them. He cleaned them from the inside out. The church is not yours, it is God's. So why then do we sometimes *deceive* one another? Why are we sometime *hypocritical* toward one another? Why do we *envy* one another? Why do we *slander* one another? Why do we *hate* one another? Why do we *pass judgment* on one another?
 15. **(Romans 14:1)** What attitude should brothers in dispute have toward each other? **(As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions).**
 16. **(Romans 14:3, 10, 13)** What ways are the strong and the weak brothers not to treat each other? **(Do not despise; do not pass judgement; do not be a stumbling block).**
 17. How would you describe the strong believer?
 18. How would you describe the weak believer?
 19. **(Romans 14:6)** According to this verse, what is important? **(Honoring the Lord).**