

Building the Church Jesus Intended: Unity, Culture, and Mission

God is building His church, but the enemy often tries to distract us with a "chapel" - a place where we can be religious and Christianized without truly knowing Christ. The difference between playing church and being the church Jesus is building is profound.

Why Is Unity So Important in the Church?

Unity among believers is a clear work of God because we cannot achieve it ourselves. Our nation excels at division - we naturally separate into groups based on preferences, race, and countless other factors. When the world sees Christians divided, they question why they should listen to our message about Jesus.

Scripture reminds us that "where there is unity, God commands a blessing." The reverse is also true - where division exists, God's blessing is hindered. Unity isn't simple; it requires intentional effort because our flesh and the world fight against it.

God's Miraculous Unity in Diversity

Isaiah 41:18-20 paints a powerful picture of God's work: "I will open up rivers for them on the high plateaus... I will fill the desert with pools of water... I will plant trees in the barren desert - cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, cypress, fir, and pine."

This imagery is miraculous for two reasons:

1. These trees don't naturally grow in deserts
2. These different types of trees don't naturally grow together

God says He does this "so that all who see this miracle will understand what it means, that it is the Lord who has done this." Our unity despite our differences testifies to God's supernatural work.

How Do We Fight for Unity in the Church?

1. Keep Jesus at the Center

Jesus brought us together, and He must remain the center of everything. He is the glue that holds us together. Without Him, we would never have met each other. When Jesus is truly at the center, He decides, leads, promotes, honors, and uses us all equally.

2. Build Genuine Relationships

We can't settle for superficial Sunday greetings. We must truly care for one another, pray for each other, celebrate victories together, and stand with each other in struggles. We're called to family, not just meetings.

Colossians 3:12 instructs us: "As God's chosen people who are holy and well beloved by God himself, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

3. Forgive Quickly

Don't hold onto offenses. If you have something against a brother or sister, go directly to them. Don't allow gossip or backbiting to fester.

4. Celebrate Others

When someone succeeds, we all succeed. Rejoice with those who rejoice.

5. Care and Pray for Each Other

Many in our church family are battling major issues - physical, emotional, and relational. Pray for one another daily.

6. Don't Let Yourself Be Isolated

Share your struggles with others, even if it's just asking for prayer without details.

7. Seek the Best for Others

Practice unselfish love, be generous with time and resources, and be open-handed with one another.

8. Delight in Our Differences

Our differences make us stronger together. Just as those diverse trees in Isaiah create a miraculous display, our diversity displays God's creative work.

Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21: "I do not pray for these alone... but also for all those who will ever believe and trust in me through their message... that they may all be one... so that the world may believe without any doubt that you sent me."

What Kind of Culture Should We Build in the Church?

Culture doesn't just happen - it must be intentionally developed. If we don't shape our culture, the world around us will. Here are six essential aspects of church culture:

1. A Culture of Christ

The church is not about people; it's a people who are about Jesus. He must have supremacy in everything. Colossians 1:17-18 reminds us: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church."

Many have been raised in church but not raised in Christ. When we lose our wonder of Jesus, we lose our why, and then we lose our way.

2. A Culture of Conviction

Our convictions must be based on God's Word, not just traditions and preferences. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives."

The greatest threat to God's Word isn't those who directly oppose it, but those who claim to believe it while remaining ignorant of what it says.

3. A Culture of Community

The church isn't just friends; it's family. Psalm 68:6 says God "puts the lonely in families." You don't choose your family - you're added to something bigger than yourself.

How we live in community is "the final proof to the world that what we say about Jesus is true."

4. A Culture of Service

We should be looking for ways to serve one another and our community.

5. A Culture of Calling

We're called to make a difference wherever God has placed us. Your workplace, school, or neighborhood is not an accident - it's your mission field.

6. A Culture of Commission

"We won't impact the world by faithfully going to church, but by faithfully being the church when we go into the world."

Jesus didn't command the world to go to church; He commanded the church to go to the world (Matthew 28). The church exists for mission - we're here to prepare the world for Christ's return.

Life Application

This week, consider how you can contribute to building the church Jesus intended:

1. Examine your heart: Is Jesus truly at the center of your life? Are you focused more on religious activities or on your relationship with Him?
2. Evaluate your relationships: Are you building genuine connections with other believers? Who in your church family needs your support right now?
3. Assess your convictions: Are they based firmly on Scripture, or have you allowed cultural preferences to shape your beliefs?
4. Consider your mission field: Where has God strategically placed you to make a difference? Your workplace, neighborhood, or school is not an accident.
5. Take one step toward unity: Reach out to someone different from you in the church. Listen to their story and look for what you have in common in Christ.

Remember, we're not called to build a chapel of religious activity but to be the church that Jesus is building - diverse, united, and on mission with Him. What specific action will you take this week to align yourself with His vision for His church?