

We Are United in Christ

We often teach that we are all part of the body of Christ and are one church despite the denominational and doctrinal lines we draw to label and divide us. This is nothing new. Even in Jesus' day, the Jews had different sects or factions. There were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. There was a doctrinal disagreement between the two that separated them, though they worshipped together and served God together.

When Jesus ascended to Heaven almost 2000 years ago, he left behind apostles and disciples to preach the gospel and make disciples, thereby growing the Church; the *one Church*. He did not give them instructions to divide up doctrinally. He told them to go and make disciples by spreading the gospel throughout the land. Over time, it is man who has created all these divisions and doctrinal lines. It is also man who has been the one to start arguing over who is right and who is wrong over these doctrinal differences, just like the Pharisees and Sadducees arguing over the concept of resurrection.

We believe we could do so much more for the Lord in his name if we stopped focusing on minor doctrinal differences and started doing exactly what Jesus told us to do, the way he showed us to do it. The world is getting more and more difficult to practice Christianity the way we have over the past centuries. The idea of building bigger buildings is coming to an end. The more we focus on attendance, donations, and building size, the more we lose ground in the spiritual war being waged all around us. We are being separated spiritually by the enemy of our soul and will be easier to conquer that way.

That is not the church Jesus instituted. The Church must make a course correction. Let us look at Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians is a great book of instruction for a growing church. It contains great wisdom for growing groups and congregations as they minister to their communities. Chapter 4 really cements the thought of a unified church body, not a fractured one.

Let's read Ephesians 4:1-7

(1) As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (2) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (3) Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (4) There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism; (6) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (7) But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

The Apostle Paul starts giving simple instruction of how they ought to act and why. He starts by urging them to live a life worthy of the calling they have received. When you said yes to Jesus' invitation for forgiveness and salvation you were adopted into the family of God. You took on the name of God as anyone does when they are adopted into a family. Live worthy of the name you have taken on; that of Christian. Don't do or say anything that will reflect poorly on the Lord. And when you do, because none of us is perfect, repent immediately and ask for forgiveness. Jesus is faithful to forgive you, in the name of the Father.

That's not easy to do, and we can't do it in our own power or ability. It takes the Holy Spirit living and working in us every day. We are supposed to be gentle and patient, loving each other as brothers and sisters because we are. We have all been adopted into the family of God. He tells us to make every



effort to keep the unity of the Spirit. He even tells us how to do that. He says to do that by keeping the peace with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Paul then points out what many church leaders don't want to hear today. They want to focus on their group and ignore the rest. They want to only minister to *their own* and not the ones they disagree with. Verse 4 of Ephesians chapter 4 starts out, "There is one body". That is one church or one Bride of Christ.

We are united in Christ. We need to act that way. We need to live that way. We need to preach and teach that way. We need to stop arguing over minor doctrinal differences and celebrate the eternal life we have all received through Christ Jesus.

If you have been part of a Cell Life Church ministry somewhere in the world, verses 11 and 12 of Ephesians chapter 4 should be quite familiar to you.

Ephesians 4:11-12

(11) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (12) to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

This is a cornerstone piece of scripture for Cell Life Church and we preach it often. Whenever we have the opportunity to teach pastors and church leaders, this is foundational for our teaching.

Church leaders have a responsibility and biblical mandate to equip the people they have been entrusted to lead. This is so the people can effectively go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples. That is the church leader's first and most important priority with respect to ministry. When church leaders effectively build up the people God has entrusted them to lead, the Church is built up.

Let's look at the next verse though. Because this instruction for us has a limit when it is no longer necessary. Let's read verse 13.

Ephesians 4:13

(13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

In other words, the role of the church leader only lasts until the people being lead reach unity with the rest of the body and mature in Christ. Many church leaders do not lead their people to spiritual maturity. They prefer to keep their people dependent on them their whole lives. This is not biblical! Church leaders should be teaching and equipping the people in their groups and congregations to pray, study the Bible, and serve on their own as they grow in Christ.

When a church leader's focus is on Christ and giving him all the glory, it is easy. When a church leader's primary focus starts to try and keep some of the glory for themselves, especially in the form of pride, they miss the mark and their efforts will be their own, not those of the Lord.

Church, this leadership model is nothing new. When we go back to Moses in Exodus chapter 18, we read about his service to all of Israel and how overwhelming it was. He was not a dictator. He was merely a prophet speaking for the Lord. At one point, Moses is so overwhelmed with the day to day duties of leading all of Israel and mediating their fights and arguments. His father-in-law, speaking with the Spirit



of the Lord, told him to appoint wise elders to hear these arguments and squabbles and mediate between them. Moses was not a dictator. He was the chief servant of the Lord.

The point of all this is found in the next 3 verses of Ephesians chapter 4.

Ephesians 4:14-16

(14) Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. (15) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (16) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

That is the result of following Jesus' plan for growing the Church. The people who have taken on the name Christian will no longer be like infants. We will no longer be tossed back and forth by popular teachings and the cunningness of the devil. We will be able to discern the devil's tactics and point them out to others. We will see the dangers of new teachings that are not based on scripture in its entirety but instead based on twisting small pieces of scripture and taking them out of context. We will speak the truth in love and will grow to respect one another as we grow together loving Christ as our head. Each member will do their part, trusting every other member will be doing their part, and the whole of the Church will grow and the devil will hasten to defeat.

We are *one Church*. We are united in Christ. This is the Church that Jesus is building that the gates of Hell cannot stand against. A mature body of believers who have the wisdom and joy of the Lord and the patience to act when and how the Lord asks.

Amen

