

The Pastor's Pen

The following article, written by Steve Troxel of "God's Daily Word Ministries", was sent to me by one of our Elders here at Surfside. While I know very little about the writer of the article, I was profoundly impacted by his words. In my last sermon I posed the question - "Do we love one another as Christ has loved us?" That question undoes me, because I know that even in my best moments, I do not come close. I need Jesus so desperately! I hope you are equally challenged by Troxel's challenge to us being sure to remember that we cannot love in this way unless we first receive the power to love from Christ.

Blessings, Tim Melton

United in Purpose

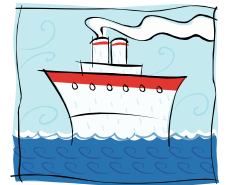
In the message "His Disciples" we saw how our love for one another demonstrates we are true followers of Jesus Christ; "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). We saw our call for a sacrificial love, focused on those with clear needs: the lonely, hurting, anxious, depressed or hungry - needs which require definite action.

But there is another expression of Christian love - a love which is still sacrificial, but one that requires us to withhold certain actions, place restraints on our words, and definitely increase our time in prayer. This is the love which leads to unity in our local fellowship.

1 Corinthians 1:10

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."

There is a story of a man lost at sea. He is treading water and has given up all hope. Suddenly, a ship appears on the horizon and moves his way. His strength surges as he wildly waves his arms; rescue is near! But as the ship gets closer, he sees the passengers yelling at one another; many are punching, kicking and spitting; and some are even being thrown overboard. It doesn't take long for the man to begin swimming as fast as he can AWAY from the ship.



We are passengers on the gospel ship, and God's Word continually calls us to unity; "conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). If we are united with Christ, we ought to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose"

Philippians 2:2

As Jesus prayed to the Father, He made it clear why we are to unite: "so the world may believe that You have sent Me" (John 17:21).

Unity is never a call for compromise on the essentials of the gospel. We must never give a single step of ground regarding the necessity and sufficiency of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. But when we begin to divide over issues like the format of our worship service, the structure of our programs, or the look of our facility, perhaps we have stepped over the line of Biblical unity.

I can't define the exact line of unity in your local fellowship. But I can confidently suggest there is greater room for unity than what first appears. If all of us will honestly remove our pride and understand God's purpose in a unified fellowship, we will see much more room for grace and love. Let's truly show the love of Christ. Let's all draw closer and closer to Jesus and show the world we are united in Spirit, united in purpose.

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