

## The Way to Unity

James 4:7-8

### Introduction:

- I. One of the biggest debates taking place in the religious world today concerns the issue of unity.
  - a. We know that God desires unity.
    - i. Jesus prayed the night he was arrested that “They may be one as we are one.”
    - ii. Paul instructed the Ephesian church that there is “one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.”
  - b. However, many misunderstand unity.
    - i. John 17:17-23 – Christ wants the disciples “sanctified” by truth. To sanctify is to set apart for God’s purpose. The unity is based on them being “in truth” (19). Then those who believe because of the apostles (i.e. us) must be one likewise, or “in the same way.” “I in them and you in me, that the world may know you sent me.”
    - ii. Eph. 4:3 – Before listing the essentials of unity, Paul wants the Ephesians to be “endeavoring to keep the unity *of the Spirit* in the bond of peace.”
  - c. So, God’s word is truth, and we are to be sanctified (and so unified) by the truth. Our unity therefore must be based on the Word of God!
    - i. If we are to be unified, we must all likewise be “in Christ.”
- II. We will talk today of three things that are necessary in order for us to be unified in the Word.
- III. Notice our text in James 4:7-8. This is James’ solution to war, fighting, and selfishness (all of which get in the way of unity). These commands, when accepted by everyone, will result in a total unity of God’s people
  - a. Submit yourselves to God – Our mindsets have to be the same.
  - b. Resist the Devil – Our actions need to have the same goals in mind.
  - c. Draw near to God – If we are close to God, we are close to one another.
- IV. Ephesians gives us the same warnings
  - a. With humility and gentleness – The mindset.
  - b. Walk in a manner worthy of the calling – The actions.
  - c. Maintaining the Spirit’s unity – Closeness to God is the only way for us to be close here.
- V. So we must do these *in the Word!*

### Discussion:

- I. Be of one mind in the Word.
  - a. I Corinthians 1:10-13 – We do not need to foster division by saying which preacher we follow!
    - i. One thing that makes me wary of what someone teaches is when they say, “My preacher says [X].”

1. Paul quickly diffuses this idea in the first words he writes to Corinth—a church plagued with prostitution, lawsuits, incest, and mockery of the Lord’s Supper!
  - ii. Notice also that “I am of Christ” is one of the divisions!
    1. We can be divisive even if we are preaching the truth!
    2. There are those who believe the church to be a denomination, and I am not referring to those outside the church who misunderstand its origin. I am referring to members of the church in their discussions with others.
      - a. A denomination is a “class or kind, as of coins, having a specific name or value.”
        - i. So anything with a different name is a denomination?
          1. “I’m church of Christ.”
        - ii. We are Christians. We are known by his name. If we emphasize “I am church of Christ,” it is no different than someone saying, “I am Baptist,” or “I am catholic.”
  - b. Like James emphasized, we must also be subjected to God, otherwise we cannot be unified to one another.
    - i. That is how the military obtains a unified armed forces—it brings all soldiers into subjection of the same leaders.
    - ii. This requires us to be completely immersed in the Word, and also requires that we know the Word thoroughly. How can we be of one mind in something unless we both understand it fully?
      1. Winston Churchill said, “If everyone were fully informed, they would make the same decision.”
    - iii. We must adore the Word and not be able to get by one day without it. How far would you get on vacation if you only looked at the map once a week? Most likely you would end up lost. Well, since the Bible is our map, and since many Christians are not following it or are not familiar with it, they too will be lost.
- II. Walk in a manner worthy of the Word.
- a. Though we read the same Bible, it will do no good if we do not all do what it says correctly. Notice the rest of Ephesians 4.
    - i. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God.
    - ii. But grace was given to *each one of us* according to the measure of Christ’s gift...Verses 10-16.
      1. This **REQUIRES** that we all do our part to ensure that the gospel continues to be spread. Whether you teach Christians, evangelize to the lost, care for (pastor) God’s sheep, or take part in the leading of worship, you better be doing something to bring the church closer to the Bible.
        - a. The whole body grows and is edified by “that which EVERY joint supplieth.” If you are not growing spiritually

or are not helping to spread the Gospel, you are causing Christ's body to limp, ache, and to be ineffective.

III. Draw near to God through the Word.

- a. This aspect of unity can easily be expressed by the analogy of a triangle. If we look at a triangle with God at the top, then as we each get closer to God, we get closer to one another.
  - i. Not only this, but God meets us halfway!
    1. James 4:8 – Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
- b. If you want to feel closeness and intimacy with your spouse, experts recommend:
  - i. Communication – Talk about everything—your day, your fears, your goals, your problems with one another, etc.
  - ii. Time alone together – This gives room for you to know one another better and spend time together, not distracted by anyone or anything else. Go out on dates, retreat away together.
  - iii. Talk well of them to everyone else – This reminds you of what you love about one another and constantly renews your love and respect for one another.
    1. Analogy of a man who does not do these for his wife.
    2. Are these not also necessary for spiritual intimacy with God?
      - a. Communicate – Listen to the Bible. Do not pretend to listen to what it says, but wholly put your mind on it. Respond in prayer, and tell God about your day, your fears, your goals, and your problems!
        - i. Psalm 1 – Meditation on the word leads us to be a “tree planted by streams of water.”
        - ii. James 5:13 – When you are distressed, go to God with it!
      - b. Spend Time Alone – Go away to pray or study. Find a place, whether physical or mental, where the only thing that seems real and close to you is the Bible. Let nothing distract you.
        - i. Matthew 6:6 – Go to your inner room.
        - ii. Matthew 14:23 – Go to your mountaintop.
      - c. Talk Well of God – Preach the Gospel to the lost, tell others how God has changed your life and your outlook. Show that God has made you a better person and that you want your relationship with him to continue to grow.
        - i. Matthew 10:32-33 – Do not be ashamed of him.
        - ii. II Peter 1:5-11 – Abound in these Spiritual qualities.