

The New Testament speaks often of the *one* body of which Jesus is the head (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; Matt. 16:18; etc.). The church does not have many bodies anymore than it has many heads. Not long after the days of the apostles, man began to corrupt the teachings of Christ. As a result of that corruption there are many denominations in the world today. It is not in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures for man to simply *accept* all of the deviations from the Word and agree to have something *we* might call “unity.” It would hardly meet the criteria we just read about in I Corinthians 1:10.

Men and women who are sincere about making every effort to be pleasing to God must be willing to lay aside whatever *they* want the church to be and learn what it is that *God* directs us to do through His inspired Word. Unity based on anything *other* than the Word is not God approved unity. It is instead a culture that values “love” and “unity” as two cardinal virtues that *exclude* all *other* directives found in the Word. In such a culture, *feelings* replace study of the Bible as the measure of Truth. Our current culture is much more receptive to visual than it is to verbal. In other words, we believe it *if* we see it, feel it or experience it. Failure to allow the Word to guide our thinking has left many with the idea that if a thing is *believed* and *felt* strongly enough “it just must be so — God would not allow it to be otherwise!” This obviously, is *not* a dependable method to determine what God would have us to do. He has provided us with His inspired Word so that we have something much more solid than our feelings on which to base our beliefs. We as Christians, are people of The Book — not of our feelings where it concerns sound doctrine.

A word of caution however — in I Corinthians 8:1 and 2, Paul warns us about those who might take *pride* in knowing more than others. Obviously, acquiring knowledge for the sake of acquiring knowledge is just as sinful as is willful ignorance of the doctrinal truths found in the Word. Knowledge of God’s Word should always be used to discern Truth from error. Acquiring knowledge cannot be seen as an end in itself any more than can “unity” with a superficial basis. Satan knows how to “unite” and conquer. When confused sheep start to run over a cliff, an individual sheep can only save itself by separating from the flock. In this case, unity would mean destruction of all. The “wise” sheep would separate itself from those others bound for destruction. Satan’s attempt to “unite” the church that Jesus died for, with denominations that have resulted from mankind’s corruption of the teaching’s of Christ, would be similar to these “united” sheep. Unity is no treasure if it is at the price of compromise. Loyalty to the Word of God is what should matter to sincere Christians. *All* teachings and practices *must* be *tested* by the Scriptures. (II Timothy 3:16; Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 5:21)

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*“Diligence” is a privately funded publication of:  
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# DILIGENCE

*“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11*

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Volume 2

April 15, 2003

Issue 5

## Unity

In the previous issue of *Diligence* we had closed with a very brief discussion of unity. We’re going to continue with that discussion in this issue.

*“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (I Corinthians. 1:10 NIV)*

*“There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19 NASB)*

*“...mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” (Romans 16:17-18 KJV)*

It should be very clear from these Scriptures that God hates division. It’s also probably safe to say that there are *none* of us who *want* division in the church of our Lord. We all desire to have unity. But the question we must ask ourselves is this. Is going along just to keep the peace unity as God would have it to be? Unity is not agreeing to disagree. Thayer defines “unity” as: “*one, unanimity, agreement.*”

*“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me. (John 17:20-21 NIV)*

Can we for even one minute, think that there is anyway we can have the kind of unity for which Jesus was praying, with those who teach a variety of doctrines — some of which are completely different from what the Bible *clearly* teaches? Is it conceivable that the Father would teach one thing and that the Son would teach something different? What would make us think that this was the kind of unity for which Jesus was praying when He said “*...that they may all be one;... as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.*”

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God desires that there be unity of doctrine among His people. Let's read this again.

*“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (I Corinthians 1:10 KJV)*

In the previous issue we stated that unity *must* be based on Truth and that the *only* standard on which that Truth can be based is God's book — the Bible. It is our *only* source for sound doctrine. The Scriptures we included were these:

*“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” (Titus 1:9 NIV) “You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine;” (Titus 2:1 NIV). “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deed” (II John: 9-11 KJV). “...**If** ye continue in my word, **then** are ye my disciples indeed; (John 8:31 KJV)*

These verses make it abundantly clear that one is considered a “disciple” if one continues in the Word, holds firmly to the message, teaches sound doctrine, and abides in the doctrine of Christ. So what is the “doctrine of Christ.” Notice in I Cor. 1:10 that Paul is addressing the brethren. This would mean that those to whom he is speaking, have most certainly accepted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Yet he pleads with them to speak the same thing and to have no divisions among them. We would have to conclude therefore that the unity for which he is asking, goes *beyond* a belief that Christ is the Son of God. Otherwise, there surely would have already *been* unity among those “brethren” and Paul would have had no need to address this subject at all.

Unity not only goes beyond the belief that Jesus Christ is God's Son but the unity that God desires is also conditional. It *must* be based on sound doctrine and our only source for knowing what sound doctrine might consist of is God's book — the Bible. A form of unity that is based on any source *other* than the Bible is not unity based on Truth and can not be approved of by God according to these Scriptures we have just read. We must conclude therefore that there's a kind of unity of which God approves and a kind of unity of which He does *not* approve because it is not in accordance with the teachings (or “...*sound doctrine*...”) stated in the Bible.

When we attempt to impose a kind of “man made unity” that includes various denominations teaching a variety of doctrines — some of which are not “sound”

according to the Word — it simply *can not* be what Jesus prayed for in His prayers. Could we imagine that the apostles were all members of conflicting religions that taught a variety of different doctrines — some not even *close* to what the Lord had taught them?

God is the author of unity. He is its source.

*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. (I Corinthians 14:33 KJV)*

Unity is not agreeing to disagree. It is not turning one's back on and ignoring our differences. Unity is not ecumenical cooperation. These things may be “union” but they are not “unity.” Unity is not the same as union. Tying two cats tails together makes a union but certainly doesn't make unity! Unity involves oneness, singleness, truth and harmony that is based on God's Word and humble submission to it. It is being of one mind.

*“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:(I Peter 3:8 KJV)*

Let's go back *again* and read I Corinthians 1:10.

*“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (KJV)*

Paul wrote these words to a divided church in Corinth. He gave them five things to do that would meet God's plan for unity:

- 1) *speak the same things*
- 2) *no divisions among you*
- 3) *perfectly joined together*
- 4) *in the same mind*
- 5) *in the same judgement*

Does this plan for unity sound like agreeing to disagree or ignoring differences? Webster defines unity as “*something considered complete in itself.*” The church that Jesus died to establish is not part of something greater. It's not *part* of the whole. It *is* the whole itself. It is the foundation of the Truth. It is the way God chose to make His wisdom known.

*“if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (I Timothy 3:15 NIV)*

*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, (Ephesians 3:10 NIV)*