



Divinely Blessed & Restored

United We Stand, Divided We Fall[®]

Submitted By: Doris B. Ryans



1. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*
2. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments;*
3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. Psalms 133 KJV*

Webster defines unity as: The state of being one. The condition of accord or agreement. Unity is a challenge in the church as it is in the world, because of people; you, me, "us". As people we can be *sweet as sugar* or we can be *sour as lemons*. When it comes to Unity, *sweet as sugar* isn't the problem – but *sour as lemons* - that's a problem. An unpleasant attitude, disposition or ulterior motive usually lead to problems. Bottom line –when people get into the midst of things, we can wreck havoc on unity.

First, we must understand what's really going on when things begin to occur that create disruption within the church. You know that saying, "the devil made me do it". We say it in jest, but how many of you know that really is the truth? The devil, Satan, is on a mission to distract the church (the saints) from what we need to be doing – witnessing and bringing others to Christ. And guess who he uses – us.

What are some of the ploys Satan uses to disrupt unity? The unbridled tongue: the unrestrained, sharp, uncontrolled tongue. Ouch! It happens sometimes before we know it. This unbridled tongue can lead to words once spoken that cannot be taken back. Proverbs 26:20-22 tells us about the tongue. *Where no wood is, there the fire goest out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.*

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. KJV One of the biggest destroyers of unity is gossip. Ask yourself, do you kindle the flame, add fuel to the fire? Or, do you douse the fire?

Next there is criticism. No one really likes criticism but everyone can benefit from it, if it is "constructive criticism". Matthew Ch. 7 vs. 1-2 cautions us about "destructive" and "undo" criticism because this is the type that harms unity. The word says: *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. KJV* We should examine our motives and check ourselves before we go around passing out criticism. Here are a few rules of thumb that can help you if you occasionally suffer with an unbridled tongue:

- Talk less, listen more. Sometimes the best answer is to just be quiet.
- If what you are offering is not leading to a solution, realize you are a part of the problem.
- Ask yourself (especially if it is about someone else) is this something I need to tell, or just want to tell. Usually if it's not your own personal business, you really don't need to tell it.
- Lastly, remember if somebody will stand and talk about someone else to you, they will talk about you to someone else. (When you really, really get this one you will be cured from gossiping).

As Christians, we want to have a controlled and loving tongue. We want our words to build up and not tear down.

Another corrupter of unity is passing judgment on others actions. We must look at how we treat those who have sinned or fallen short. Do you offer forgiveness, do you show tender mercy, do you speak words of love, compassion and mercy or do you speak words of condemnation to them and about them? Jesus gives us an example of how we should treat our brother or sister that has sinned in the story about the adulterous woman in John chapter 8. In verse 7b He said: *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. KJV* No one did, because everyone standing there knew it might not have been adulterous behavior, but they were guilty of sin. The word tells us: *We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.* Therefore, we can't stand in judgment of anyone else. We are to look at others with compassion and forgiveness when they are wrong. Weakness in another is not time for exploitation, but an opportunity for us to show love, pray with them and show compassion to them.

Continued on Page -3

Last, but not least – another way unity is destroyed is when we have a lack of respect for each other and our differences of opinion. The church is no different than anywhere else, when you have a group of individuals, you will have varying opinions. We must remember, God created us to be individuals. No two of us are the same and no two of us will do things the same way. We must learn to relinquish our need to be right, to be in control, to have it my way. Instead we must learn to respect each other's opinions, and engage in discussions undetached to the outcome. I'm not saying you can't voice your opinion or idea; just do it without the "my way or the highway" attitude.

These are just a few of the things that can create discord, disharmony, and a lack of unity within the church. But there is something that each and everyone one of us can do so that discord and disharmony doesn't enter into the church. It is a 4-letter word, L –O–V–E. We each can have **love**, one for another. Not just any kind of love, but *God-like* love.

What is *God-like* love: *God-like* love concentrates on others, not yourself. I Corinthians 13:4-6 gives us the characteristics of this love: *4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.* (God never said it was easy, but that does not give us an excuse to not practice *God-like* love). Verse 7 & 8 goes on to tell us: *7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8Love never fails. Drop down to verse 13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.* KJV

God-like love doesn't just come. This type of love comes as a by-product of having a relationship with God. The closer we are to Christ, the more this type of love will show in us. You see its *God-like* love that helps us to be loving to someone who is not loving to us in return. When we have *God-like* love we can "turn the other cheek", we forget about "an eye for an eye". With *God-like* love we have wisdom; we know the time for a gentle word versus a firm hand; we know the power of an apology and a hug, and we hear the plea for help hidden under shouts and yelling. *God-like* love requires you to start the cycle of love – even when you think the other person should be the one to make the first move because they were the one acting ugly, not you. *God-like* love knows to be still when the person you are around is having "one of those days". *God-like* love chooses not to take offense and doesn't keep score or sit and plan how to "get-even".

You might be saying to yourself, this is a pretty tall order! I don't know if I can do this! You can. You just need to have a living connection with God, an intimate relationship with God, spending time with Him and studying His word. You can't have a living connection with God and not be "changed". You can't have a living connection with God and not have *God-like* love.

Continued on Page -4

We can never talk too much about unity, we can never tire of doing all that we can as individuals to make sure we are promoting unity in our church, in our ministries. We can never lose sight of the reason for the church; of the work God has appointed His people of the church, (me, you) to do. God is not down here representing himself, and His son is no longer down here, but he left His power here with us to equip us to be His ambassadors, His representatives, and His spokespersons.

We do not have energy to waste being at odds with one another. Our energy must go into witnessing to others about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and leading the lost to salvation. This means if we want our church to be an inviting place for others. We want people to see our love, one for another in the church- not pettiness, bickering, jealousy & division. Never forget how the world sees us frames their perception of the church.

Ask yourself: *Are you words filled with love, faith, hope, mercy and if necessary loving correction, constructive criticism, not the type of criticism that is tearing someone down?*

Not only in words, but also in your actions. In closing, there will always be potential for conflict. But remember, it's how we react that will determine the outcome. Let us think with love, let us hear with love, let us look with love (*you know we can give some looks that are less than loving*) and let us act with love. When we do this church will be united, it will be strong, able to withstand the storms of life. It will be a place of refuge to individuals that are going thru storms in their life and as Colossians 2:2 tell us; we will be knit together in love.

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