



PRESERVING UNITY

Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
Ephesians 4:3

I have often quoted this verse to impress the importance of preserving unity. Yet, looking back I often failed to stress verses 1 and 2 that set forth the attitudes that are necessary to have unity. This is another instance where the full context is needed.

VERSES 1 AND 2

*"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **with all humility and gentleness, with patience,** showing tolerance for one another in love."*

ATTITUDES THAT PROMOTE UNITY

HUMILITY

Lack of vanity or self-importance, modest, unpretentious, lack of boastfulness.

GENTLENESS

Amiable and tender hearted.

PATIENCE

Calm endurance of difficulty, provocation, or annoyance.

ATTITUDES THAT PREVENT UNITY

Prideful, boastful, conceited, arrogant, vain.

(Opposite to Humble)

Harsh and severe.

(Opposite of Gentle)

Unable to tolerate delay; restless.; unable to endure irritation; intolerant.

(Opposite of Patient)

Modern Sayings With Biblical Roots

Am I my brother's keeper?

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4:9

An unwillingness to assume responsibility for the welfare of others.

Eye for an eye.

"But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

Exodus 21:23-25

A demand for revenge.

(However, it originally was a statement of justice: that the punishment should fit the crime. The avenging was not to be an act of overkill.)

Fly in the ointment.

Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor.

Ecclesiastes 10:1

Anything that hinders or prevents success.

Prophet is without honor in his own country.

And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."

Matthew 13:57

Those who are personally acquainted often fail to recognize one's abilities or accomplishments.

Walking on water.

And in the fourth watch of the night He [Jesus] came to them, walking on the sea.

Matthew 14:25

High regard for one who performs particularly difficult tasks.

Or, the high opinion one has for himself. (He thinks he can walk on water.)

Laughter is the best medicine.

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

Proverbs 17: 2

One's disposition affects his or her emotional and physical well-being.

You reap what you sow.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Galatians 6: 7

The result of one's actions are determined by what has been done.



VERSE STUDY

in context,
not isolation

A Bible verse plucked from a passage can be misused or exploited to create an unfounded doctrinal teaching.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

CONTEXT

For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Corinthians 1:11-13

The division that's mentioned was caused by the converts identifying with one person or evangelist and being their disciple. Paul alludes to the cause of the contentions: They were proud. And pride begets contention.

By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.

Proverbs_13:10 NKJV

To "speak the same thing" in this passage stands opposed to "speaking different and conflicting things." On essential doctrine there is to be agreement. This general agreement is under consideration here. They were all "disciples of Christ" not their individual teachers.

OUT-OF-CONTEXT

When this verse is isolated and used to mean that all members must be in full agreement of **all things**, it promotes controversy and division, rather than unity. (I have witnessed this first-hand). Conscientious brethren have held various judgments. And whose judgment is to be accepted by all? I doubt that there is a congregation today where all members are in full agreement of all things. Perfect uniformity of judgments and opinions cannot be expected among people on any subject.

EXERCISE

Whose judgment was right? Barnabas, who wanted to take John Mark with them on the second journey, or Paul, who didn't want him to go along. Cf. Acts 15: 36-41 Both judgments were subjective.

NOTE:

One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only.

Romans 14:2

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Romans 14:5

Such differences were to be acknowledged and respected, not judged. And that's the point!

(Read Romans 14 to gain more insight into this matter.)



Ponder This

COMPETING CONCEPTS

DEMOCRATIC

My church (man-devised religion)
Of the people, by the people, for the people

AUTOCRATIC

His church (God ordained religion)
Of God, by God, for God

Today, there is growing trend to tailor religion to meet the demands of people, rather than the needs of people. People want to worship God in their own way. They go shopping for a group that offers what they're seeking. Their quest is not new.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4
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All need Jesus Christ: His love (awesome love), His power (saving power), and His Word (the truth). These are not found in churches or organizations, they are found in Jesus Christ and His Word. To be "in Christ" one must love Jesus. Loving Jesus requires keeping His commandments.

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."*

John 14:15

### **Keeping His commands require receiving His word.**

*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*

Acts 2:41

### **Receiving His word involves baptism.**

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Galatians 3:26-27

*And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:47b

**The church of Jesus Christ,  
built by the Son of God according to His specifications,  
ruled by the Son of God according to His word.**

## A Humbling Thought

Once I thought I had an original thought.  
Well, at least at the time I thought I did.



*So there is nothing new under the sun.*  
Ecclesiastes 1:9

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Bible references are from the NASB except where another translation is referenced.

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