

“Growing Together in Unity”
Romans 15:1-7

The Problem of Unity

- In Paul’s day...
 - Because of their differences, they were judging one another. (14:13)
 - Because of their differences, they were grieving one another. (14:15)
 - Because of their differences, they were destroying the work of God. (14:20)
- In our day...
 - We must identify our essential convictions.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel....⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:6, 8-10)

Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. (Romans 15:2)

- We must recognize our personal preferences.

The Solution to Unity

- Regard others as a neighbor to be helped and not an enemy to be conquered. (vv. 1-2)
 - We aren’t called to ignore our differences for the sake of peace.
 - We are called to bear others’ deficiencies for the sake of their progress.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

“All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. (1 Corinthians 10:23)

- Recognize Christ’s suffering for you. (vv. 3-4)

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4-6)

- Come together around the gospel, not unity, and pray for unity to follow. (v. 5)

Friendship arises... when two or more... discover that they have in common some insight or interest. As Emerson said, “Do you love me?” means, “Do you see the same truth?”—or at least, “Do you care about the same truth?” The man who agrees with us that some question, little regarded by others, is of great importance can be our friend.... That is why those pathetic people who simply “want friends” can never make any. The very condition of having friends is that we should want something else besides friends. Where the truthful answer to the question “Do you see the same truth?” would be “I don’t care about the truth—I only want [you to be my] friend,” no friendship can arise. Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travelers. (C.S. Lewis)

If we come to church just to be with one another, one another is all we’ll get. And it isn’t enough. Inevitably, our hearts will grow empty, and then angry. If we put community first, we will destroy community. But if we come to Christ first and submit ourselves to him and draw life from him, community gets traction. (Ray Ortlund Jr.)

- Pursue God’s glory as your highest aim.

My acceptance of my brothers and sisters in the Lord is a matter of worship. I do this not simply for my own benefit, so that I can be popular with the rest of the church. We are called to receive one another, to respect one another, to be accepting towards one another, for the glory of God. When I receive a brother or a sister without condemning them, then I am doing towards my brother and sister what God would have me to do. And in so doing I call attention to the fountainhead of patience and encouragement which is God himself. And so God is glorified in our charitable attitudes towards one another. (R.C. Sproul)