



UNITY OF THE CHURCH

PART I

Greg Barnett
Providence Baptist Church
Integrated Sunday School
June 2019

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. – Ephesians 4:1-3

Temporary Adult Education



What are we doing?
Why church unity?



Proposed Curriculum
Not preaching!
Questions for the
family



Purpose:

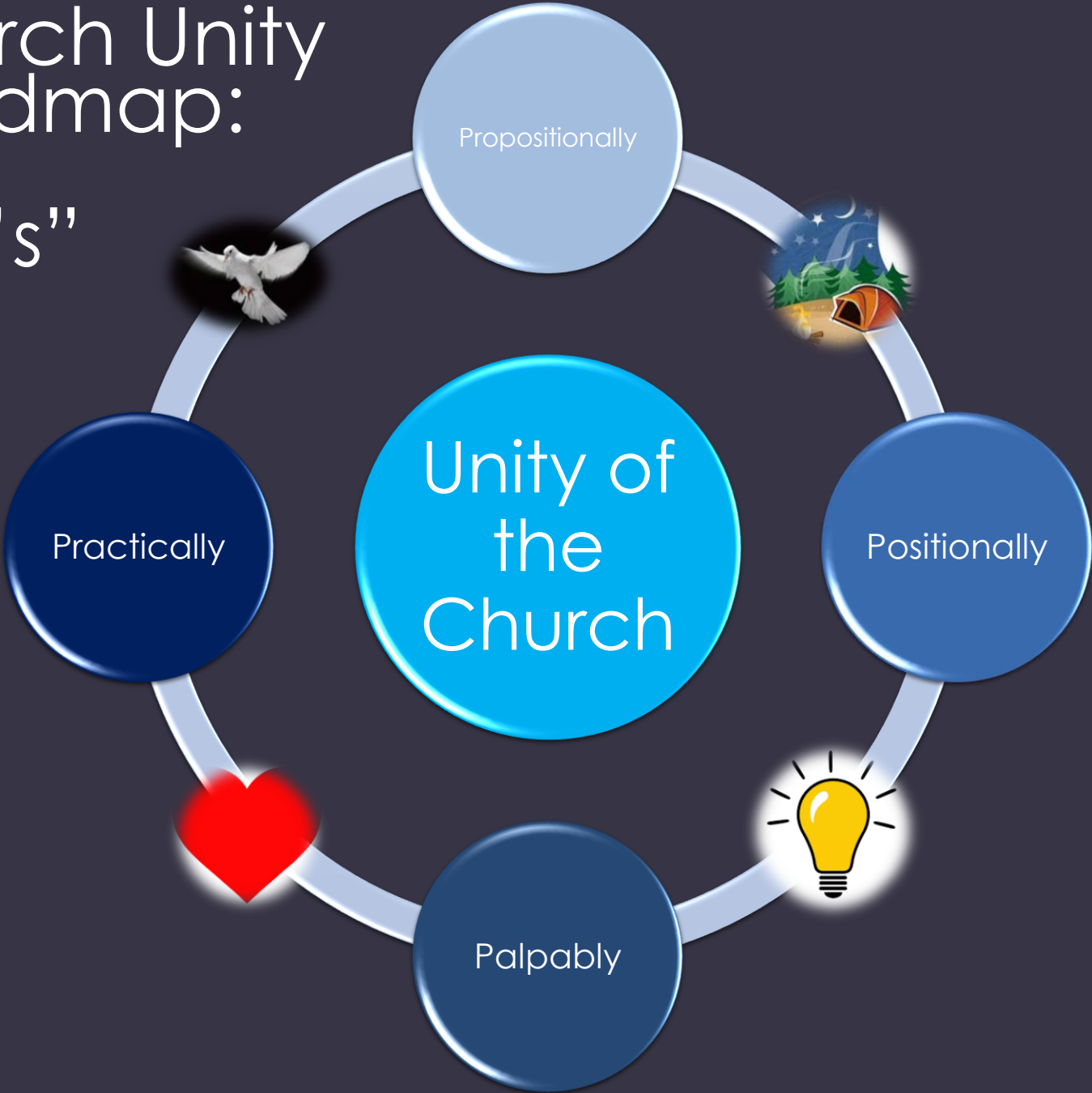
Understand what the
Bible teaches about
church unity and how we
live it out practically

Church Unity Class Format

- Not an ecclesiology class!
- Handout for personal notes and reference, but slides will be provided
- Varying depth for a wide range of ages
- The Bible is the only “textbook”
- Sit near the front!
- Feel free to ask questions by raising your hand
- Limit comments

Church Unity Roadmap:

“4 P’s”





PROPOSITIONALLY

What is the foundation of church unity?

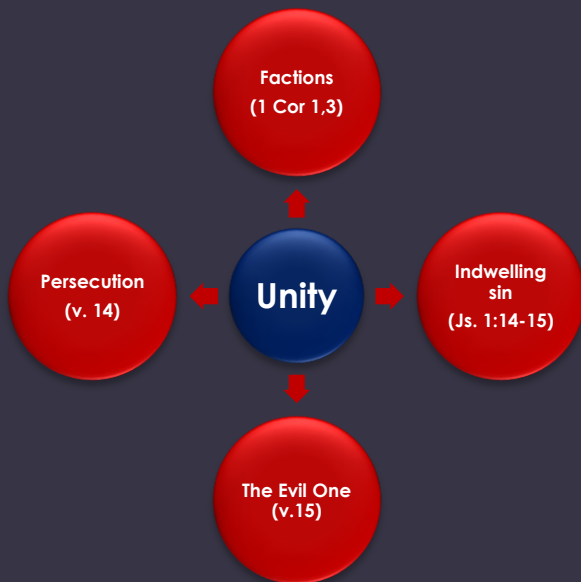
John 17 & Unity in the Godhead



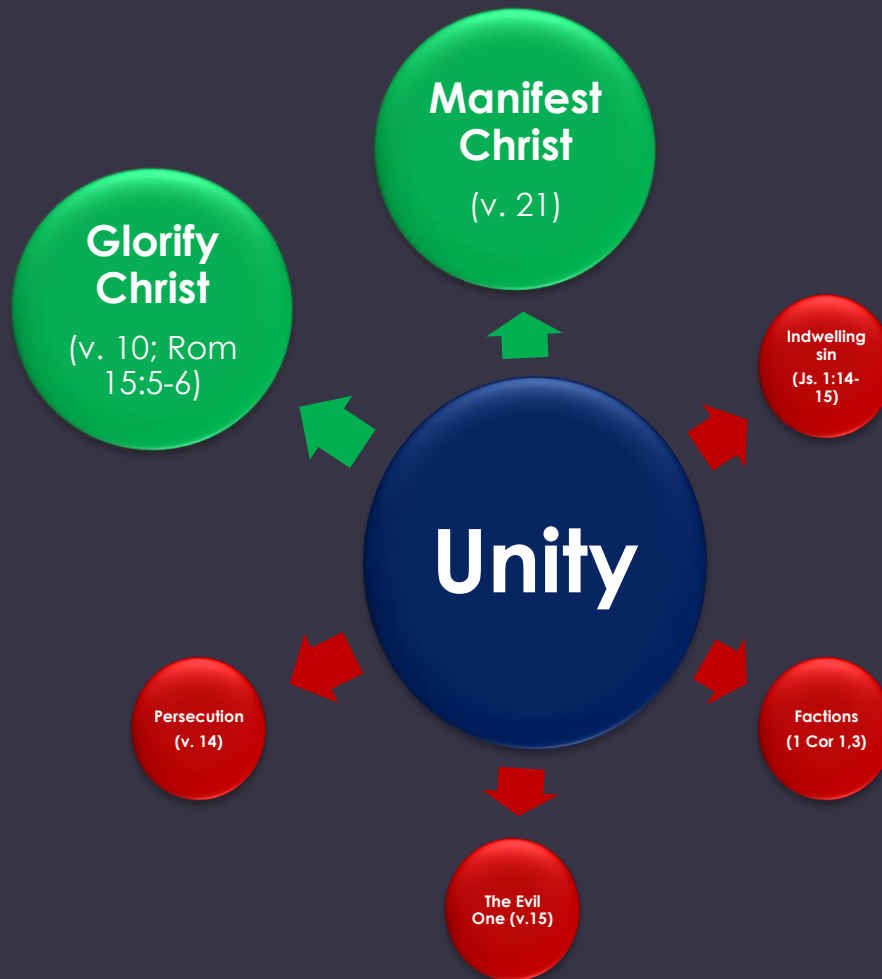
The High Priestly Prayer

- **John 17:6-23**

- We (the people in Christ, then and now, vv. 9, 20) are “in the world” – we are sojourners (vv. 14-18)
- Thus, there is the need to maintain unity!
- Purpose: to manifest Christ in the world (vv. 21, 23)
- Jesus prays, “they may be one, even as we are one.” - This is the standard of the church’s unity (v. 23)
- “Perfectly one” (v. 23) is attained through sanctification in the truth (Word of God vv. 14-19)



“This is vastly more - deeply more – than being related through a common organization.” - Piper



- **The Church is not a Human Organization – Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph 2:19-22)**
 - Unity is grounded in a shared fellowship with the Eternal Godhead (v. 21)
 - As we are sanctified in the truth, the evil that seeks to undermine our unity becomes weaker
 - As we practice unity, the church more perfectly manifests and glorifies Christ – the aims of church unity



POSITIONALLY

The Church is united by their position in Christ and
fellowship with the Spirit

Position in Christ

- **Ephesians 2:1-22**

- We are seated with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (v. 2:6)
- “For through him, both (Jew and Gentile) have access in one Spirit to the Father.” (v. 18)
- Being United in Christ means that we have a unity that is wholly independent of our own preferences (1st Corinthians 1:13)
- “The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or **shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head** thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” – Westminster Confession

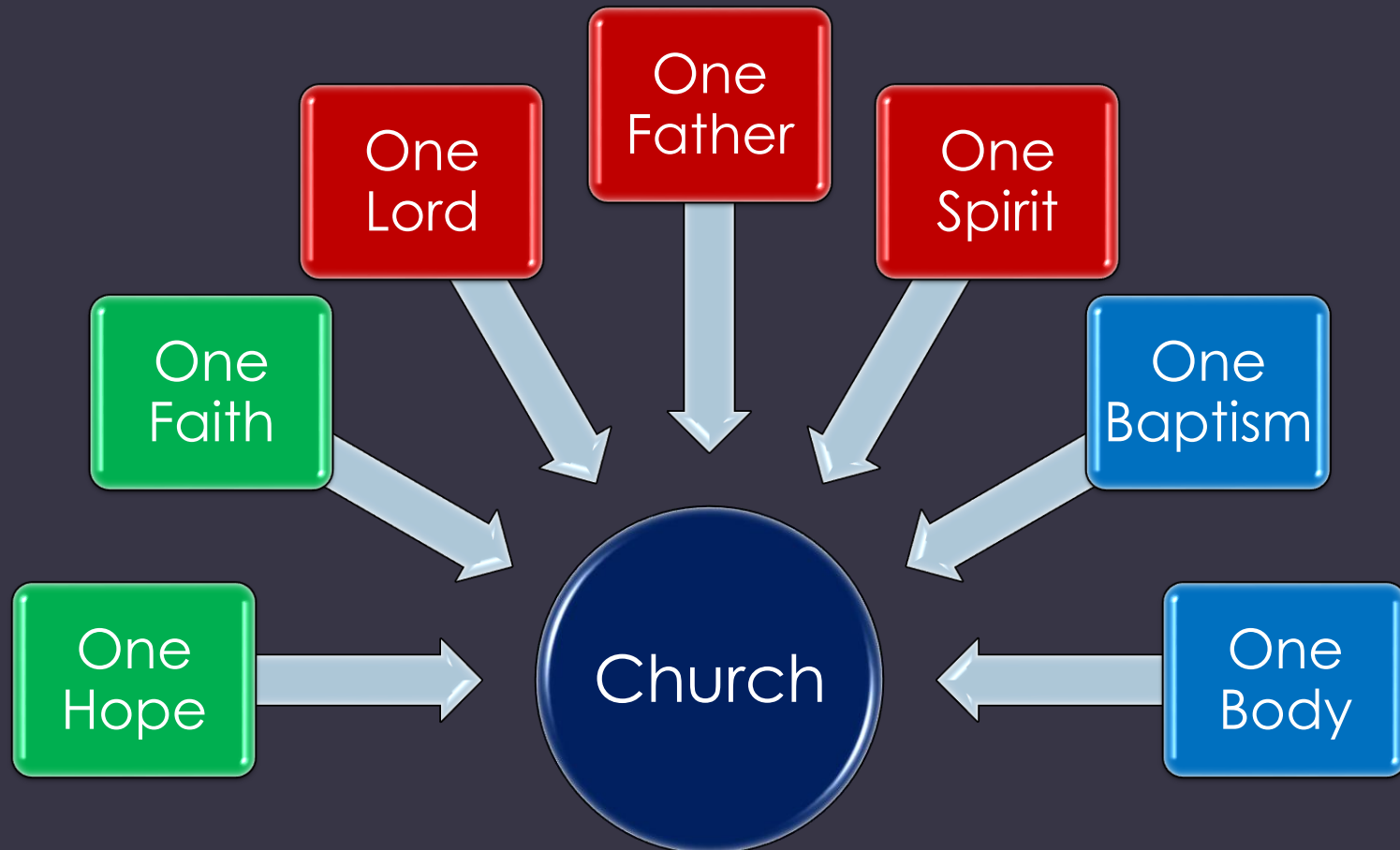
“Perhaps the greatest weakness in the Christian church is that we fail to realize who we are in Christ.” – Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones

Unity in the Spirit

- **Ephesians 4:1-6**
- The “unity of the Spirit” is not generated or developed. It is “***maintained***” (v. 3)
- Unity is Spirit given!
- “The human task is not to achieve unity among themselves, but to keep the unity already created [in Christ].” – Everett Ferguson
- We are a people united and pursuing unity (pursuing the perfect unity that Christ spoke of in John 17!)

Our unity is grounded in the “oneness”
established by Christ our Head

Ephesians 4:4-6



Humbleness in Roles

- **Ephesians 4:7**
- **1st Corinthians 12:4-31**
- Same Spirit, same Lord, same God (vv.6-7)
- The body is not created by man, but is knit together by God Himself (v. 13)
- God Himself has also arranged the members of the body (v. 18)
- God Himself has given equal honor to all in the body so that there should be no division (vv. 24-25)

*God has firmly established unity
The Church must strive to maintain it!*

“We, in conservative Christian circles, have vigorously maintained the *message* of the gospel but, at least in some areas and among some movements, have begun to lose any profound grasp of the community of Christ. We have rightly said that a relationship with God is a personal matter. In our context, though, it has become but a step, and a step many of us have unthinkingly taken, to acquiesce that a relationship with God is a purely *individual* matter. This is practical heterodoxy. Jesus said you can identify his disciples by the kind of relationship they have with *one another*, by the “love” they have for one another.” – Josh Moody



The Myth of the Lone Wolf



Next Week...

- Things that cause division in the church
- How does the church manifest its unity to the world and what is the purpose?
- Implications of the Bible's teaching on unity
- Reflection and discussion on how we view and treat each other – how we are to live...

Questions for Families

- Jesus prays that the Church manifest perfect unity. What would a church look like that maintained perfect unity?
- What does it mean to have “perfect unity”? Is the church always to be of the “same mind?”
- What are some examples of where indwelling sin results in division in the local church?
- Are there examples of factions within the evangelical church at large?
- Why should a Christian not endeavor to be a “lone wolf?”