

8.13.2023 Our Unity Should Occur Naturally

Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. **He is the Big Dog of the Universe.** Eph. says: God... **1:22** ...made Him [Jesus] head over all things to the church, **23** which is His body... And later in **4:15-16** we're given the picture of Christ, the Head **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part... So last week my point was: Jesus is the head and we are the body of the Big Dog of the Universe. And **Big Dogs Have Nothing To Prove.**

So we are **FREE** to live **4:2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We get the same message in ch5 when it says: **5:21** subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. **In the Agape Love of Christ WE WILL NOT let personality quirks, petty issues or eccentricities separate us.** As the Body of Christ we will be humble, gentle, patient and tolerant.

In so-doing we are subject[ing ourselves] to one another in the fear of Christ.

Son Logan at 13: In conversation with him I don't have to be "right."

Rebekah: rug dissension: It's only a rug- it doesn't matter.

When I subject myself like this it maintains peace in relationship and **"keeps the unity of the Spirit."**

Unity is hard. In the upper room we find JESUS praying we would be ONE: **John 17:20**

"I am not asking on behalf of these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, **21 that they may all be one**; just as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us... **Eph 2** laid out for us the astonishing move of God [in the cross] that made Jewish and Gentile disciples of Jesus "ONE" - one body! And **4:3** calls all of us to *actively, "diligently"* guard our hearts so **this Oneness is preserved.**

As divided up as the Church is, our **Unity of the Spirit** is clearly **important** e.g. **1Cor.**

1:10 Now I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, 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. **Phil. 2:2** make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Preserving this unity requires diligent effort, but according to Paul it should also arise naturally. **4:4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Boston Red Sox were playing the Mariners in Seattle. Daughter, Acacia took us to the game. There, in enemy territory, **Boston fans**, strangers from all over Puget Sound were unified by their love for their team into a powerful, cheering force. And they won!

Most of you know that our family likes to go to **Emerald City Comic Convention** [comicon]. And when we go we dress up as characters from a beloved book or movie. We almost always run into other people doing characters from the same book or movie. And, when we do, there is an immediate connection because **we all love of the same thing!**

We are strangers drawn together because of a shared LOVE [family reunions?]

Similarly, though Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, wealthy or poor, educated or not, from every nation, tribe, people and language if we call ourselves **“Christian”** or a **follower of Jesus**, then we have a **“shared Love”** that should naturally TOWER over any ball team, book, or family loyalty. Willingly stepping into the circle of Jesus’ authority **SHOULD bind us all to an unshakable unity** because the object of our love is *the singular center-point, the un-caused Cause of all light, life, beauty, and Joy: God, the Father of all; who is over all, through all and in all.*

In Eph 4:4-6 we find 7 “One statements.”_Those 7 “One” statements are **anchored by a trinitarian structure**: Spirit, Lord & God. Spirit in v4.4 *There is one body and one Spirit*, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; Lord in v5. **5 one Lord**, one faith, one baptism, And God in v6 **6 one God** and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

All the other reasons for our UNITY [body, hope, faith, baptism] flow from, arise out of, exist because of our One God and Father of all. **Deut. 6:4** “Hear, Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! If God is one, and He establishes our **faith, baptism, body** [Church] **and hope**, then our unity should arise naturally.

So let’s walk through the 7 one statements in Eph 4:4-6

One Body

Eph 4:3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is one body and one Spirit...*

I have one functional guitar. I don’t have a lineup of them hanging on the wall. I don’t stroll up and down the line and think: which of my many guitars might I play today? There’s only one. So I am diligent in my efforts to keep it safe. Another: I only have **one pair of glasses-** without them I’m blind so I am “diligent” in protecting them from damage.

This thinking is why “one body” comes up immediately after the call to “diligently” “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...” ***There is only ONE precious body of Christ.***

Eph 5:23 tells us Jesus is the Savior of the body. **Eph 1:23** tells us the Church IS Jesus’ Body. **Eph 2** tells us His body is multi-ethnic: made of Jews and gentiles- people from every nation, tribe, people and language. **And 4:4 states clearly there is only ONE body.** Not 2 or 5 or 45K. **Only one.** God has chosen to commend his work in the world to this ONE Body. To do that work well, the Body [the Church] must share a **Unity of the Spirit.** *Factions and enmity only serve the Enemy.*

So that unity needs to be actively cultivated and guarded.

How is that possible with **45K denominations** and counting **J.I. Packer**, author, scholar, life-long Anglican, professor of systematic theology At Regent College and lover of Jesus gives us an answer to work with. Fully aware of all the differences between us, he says: “Christian unity means acknowledging that we- all of us- are sharers in the love of the same Savior, and the power of the same Holy Spirit, and the worship of the same Heavenly Father”.

There is one Body and if you're part of it, then it's up to you to diligently cultivate its unity.

One Spirit

Eph 4:3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is one body and one Spirit...*

In the 2nd Creation story in Gen 2 we're told: **Gen 2:7** Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living person.

So God made the **body of Adam** and then animated that body with the breath of life.

In Hebrew and Greek the words for **Spirit and Breath** are the same word: Heb: **ruach** and Grk: **pneuma**. **It makes beautiful sense** then that here in 4:4 one Body is followed immediately by one Spirit. Because it is the ONE and ONLY Holy Spirit of God that animates, the Body of Christ.

Eph 1:13-14 tells us that when we believe we are "sealed in Christ" by the Holy Spirit who is a first installment of our eternal inheritance. **The Spirit** is the **guarantee** that we will see **The Day of Redemption** [4:30]. **2:18** tells us, in the present, all the parts of the Body have access to the Father through the One Spirit who dwells within. *And that's a two-way street, cupcake!* We have access to the Father through the Spirit, and the Father also has access to us through the Spirit.

If the singular Spirit of God dwells within ALL God's followers, binding us all together, then our Unity in the Spirit should occur naturally and we should cultivate & keep it.

One Hope

4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling;*

So there is **one Body** -the Church- and that body is brought to LIFE and sealed for the coming Day of Redemption by the **Singular Spirit of God** [1:13-14, 4:30]. This **"Day of Redemption"** – the Day when **All Things** are put right in Christ- is the day we receive ALL the inheritance God has for us.

It's the day God's long-term plan -His Eternal Purpose- comes to completion; and the redeeming power of the cross spills over into the entire Kosmos. This was God's plan: that all of God's Godness would Col 1:19b ...dwell in Him, **20** and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. It's the day when the prayer Jesus taught us is finally and completely answered: **And God's Kingdom comes and His will is done on earth as it is in Heaven** [Matt 6:10].

This Day of Redemption is the day when God's big plan is complete and He... **eph 1:10** ...brings all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. And finally and forever "the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the sea." **This is the one Hope of our calling**. This hope is the shared destiny of all who love Jesus and call Him Lord: All Creation reconciled to God and redeemed through Jesus Christ our Lord. This shared hope should naturally establish a Unity of the Spirit.

One Lord

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord,

This One Lord is, of course Jesus, referred to multiple times in Ephesians as “**our Lord Jesus Christ**” [1:3, 1:17, twice in 6:23] Now whether we’re talking **Ephesus** or the house churches in the **Lychus Valley of Roman Asia minor**, the pagans recognized **MANY Lords**- all the Roman pantheon, trendy foreign gods from Egypt and elsewhere, and of course the Imperial family with Caesar at the top.

But for the convinced Christians **Jesus was the one and only Lord**. He was/is the One God in the flesh. He said **John 14:6** “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

The Big Dog in the Roman Empire -most of the known world- was Caesar. And the People said: **Caesar is Lord!** But Jesus is the Big Dog of the universe and we are told Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved.”

And in the letter to the church at Philippi we’re given a powerful reason for His singular Lordship: **Phil. 2:6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Our one Lord Jesus Christ- his example in the scripture as illuminated by the **One Spirit** should naturally establish, cultivate and guard a solid and powerful unity.

One Faith, One Baptism

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling;
5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

These two elements [faith & baptism] connect directly with “One Lord.” Our One Lord is the object of our FAITH [eph 3:12] and it’s into our One Lord we are BAPTIZED.

One Faith is not about a shared creed- a set of religious standards. That’s not in mind here. One Faith is simply **the shared belief in Jesus as Lord**. The **One faith** that should bind brothers and sisters to dwell in unity is that **Jesus is Lord**.

He is the King. He is the supreme authority over all things by virtue of His Cross and Resurrection and Ascension. And so as the absolute Lord of all, He is due the faith of everyone who calls themselves Christian. And, in that Faith, every declared Christian should live accordingly, subjecting their lives to His will. But alas many do not.

Jesus anticipated this in Matthew 7: **Matt. 7:21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ **23** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Our one faith in Jesus as Lord SHOULD naturally establish, cultivate and guard a solid and powerful unity in the Spirit.

One Baptism might hang us up with a lengthy discussion of “Is it water or Spirit baptism” but that would miss the point.

It’s simply Christian Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a persons *public confession of that ONE Faith in our One Lord Jesus Christ*. It is the singular moment we publicly pass from Death [laid down in the water] and rise up to new Life [lifted from the water]. This shared experience of publicly confessing our faith and passing from death to life should establish our unity in the Spirit.

And finally: **One God and Father of all**

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

This is the biggest reason we should have unity in the Spirit: there are not many gods. **There is only ONE God.** And this one God is Father of all which means **He is a God of Love.** All of His work, all of His will, all of His judgment is founded on His love for His Creation. **Job 12:10** In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. **Psa. 145:17** The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

And our One God is OVER all- that is: our singular, loving, Father God is and always has been and always will be in control of His creation. **Prov. 19:21** Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’S purpose that prevails.

And our One God is THROUGH all - that is He did not wind up the world and walk away. He is actively involved guiding, directing, sustaining, upholding, loving and providing. Think psalm 139: **5** You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. **7** Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

And our One God is IN all. Our One God is deeply involved in every one of his image-bearing humans. **But by the presence of His Holy Spirit, He is especially present in His committed children.** He, Himself, by His Spirit dwells in us. **Eph 2:22** in whom you ... are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Caesar was not a god. **Artemis of the Ephesians** was not a god. **Isis** of the Egyptians was not a god. **There is only one God, Creator and Father of all;** always engaged. always reaching out, always working to redeem- full of mercy and loving-kindness- like a loving Father.

This understanding that there is one God, with one Eternal Purpose carried out by the One Lord Jesus Christ, and empowered by the One Spirit SHOULD naturally establish, cultivate and guard an unshakable unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

If it is not or it does not. We should ask God, “why?”

And be prepared to listen.

Because we’ve got ample reason for Unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Eph. 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Eph. 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. **8** Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE *THE* CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO PEOPLE.”

Eph. 4:9 (Now this *expression*, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? **10** He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

11 And He gave some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, some *as* evangelists, some *as* pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; **15** but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.