

HOW TO LIVE FOR UNITY

Ephesians 4:1-3

“The Union it must and shall be preserved.” *“We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it...It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”* - Part of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, November 1863.

As we honor those who sacrificed for our freedom and unity as a nation, how much more should treasure freedom in Christ and seek the unity of the church? How do we live for unity?

1. BY WALKING WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING – Ephesians 4:1

- Living a Christian life and following Christ is described by Paul as a “walk.” – Colossians 1:10; 4:5. This emphasizes it is a direction of life – “a long obedience in the same direction.” Living for Christ is an ongoing growing relationship, not a one-time event.
- Walking or living worthy of our calling means knowing first of all we are called by God – Ephesians 1:18. We owe everything to God and nothing to ourselves. We were helpless hopeless sinners that God in sheer and total grace rescued through Jesus His Son – Philippians 1:27. Such grace demands worship and surrender – Romans 12:1. Our desire to please Him is the overflow of a heart bursting with grace and joy – 1 John 4:19.

2. BY LIVING OUT CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER – Ephesians 4:2

- What does walking worthy look like? – verse 2. When the world thinks of qualities to admire, it usually does not think of humility, gentleness, and patience. But these are highly prized by God and seen in Christ who desires to see them in us for His glory and our good!
- **HUMILITY** – “lowliness of mind” or seeing yourself accurately in relationship to God and to others. This character quality was despised by the ancient Greeks and Romans. They reveled in human pride. But our Lord Jesus was humble and desires His followers to be like Him – Matthew 11:29. Paul was humble in Ephesus as their example – Acts 20:19. Humility is the opposite of pride. It is God-dependence, a keen awareness of your absolute need of God’s power. Humility sees God as big and yourself small. But it leads to a healthy confidence in God. He is able, but we are not. When you are humble you don’t need to get your way as long as God is glorified – Philippians 2:3,4.
- **GENTLENESS** – “Meekness” or considerateness, courtesy. It is not weakness, but “strength under control.” Our Lord Christ desires this in His followers – Matthew 5:5. He exemplifies

gentleness – Matthew 11:29; 12:19,20. It is not natural, but supernatural - a fruit of the Holy Spirit – Galatians 5:23. Gentleness towards others is essential for unity.

- PATIENCE –“long-suffering” or long-fused, being able to bear up under provocation. It describes one who does not easily “blow his stack” or lose his temper. This quality or grace is again important for unity. The world gets mad and gets even, and seeks revenge, but the Christian endures and bears up for the sake of Christ. We are to “put up” or bear with others who rub us the wrong way or irritate us. This again is not natural, it must be supernatural – Galatians 5:22.
- LOVE –Not only do we put up with others, we seek the good and best for others – 1 Corinthians 13:4,5. Love is commitment to seek the best for others, putting their needs even ahead of own – 1 John 4:9-11. God’s kind of love is supernatural – Galatians 5:22. God’s love is uniting and inviting – Colossian 3:12-14.

3.BY MAINTAINING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT – Ephesians 4:3

- We are not commanded to create or establish unity, but to maintain or preserve it. The real unity of the Church comes only from the Holy Spirit Himself. This does not necessarily mean we all get under one “big tent” of organization or authority. The ecumenical movement often disregards truth and doctrine for “unity.” Without truth and doctrine, there is no real unity of the Spirit. We cannot compromise gospel truth for unity.
- However, followers of Christ should be those who are peacemakers and those who seek to patiently “get along” with others – Matthew 5:9, 43-45. We are to be eager or zealous to maintain unity. This affects our speech about others, and our actions with others in the church.
- Tomorrow on Memorial Day we honor especially fallen heroes who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of our Union and our Freedoms. How much more should we honor those who gave their lives for Christ, the gospel, true Unity, and our Freedom as Christians? We also should highly resolve to dedicate ourselves daily to honor Christ and seek a more perfect union of His own Body, the Church. Let us surrender to Christ governing us for His glory, by His Spirit, and for our own good.

Concluding Applications:

- Do you live different than an unbeliever? Do you desire to walk worthy of Christ?
- Are you patient with others? Would others describe you as humble?
- How are you helping maintain the unity of the church?