

THE CORE VALUE: We value \_\_\_\_\_ and expect each member to defend our family, our vision and our leaders with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

1. What unity is not:

2. What unity is:

3. What unity does:

### The Take-Off

Just past midnight on Sunday, March 3, 1991, one speeding car set off a violent chain of events that would culminate in a speech that USA Today would rank as the 22nd most memorable of all time.

Standing nervously in front of tv cameras, Rodney King addressed a Los Angeles that was reeling out of control after the acquittal of the 4 officers who had beaten Mr. King after they had finally pulled him from his car on that March night over a year earlier.

That arrest - caught on tape by a bystander - showed Rodney King beaten with batons over 50 times and kicked over 6 times, and it seemed to be a no-brainer that the men involved would be found guilty on numerous counts. Instead, they were acquitted, and the racial tension in LA exploded into the worst single episode of urban unrest in American history when 3 days of rioting caused 53 deaths, over 4,000 injuries, more than 7,000 fires, damages to 3,100 businesses and over \$1 billion in damages.

And so, on May 1, 1992, a shaken, nervous Rodney King looked into television cameras and uttered the 5 words that made him famous: "Can we just get along?"

Such a simple question.

In the years that followed, King was awarded \$3.8 million from his suit against the City of LA, was arrested on alcohol-related charges in 1993, 1995, and 2003. He was shot with buckshot in 2007 while riding his bike and had that stolen from him. In March 3, 2011, he was stopped for erratic driving exactly 20 years to the day of his beating, and was arrested again in July under suspicion of driving under the influence.

"Can we just get along?" The answer would appear to be no.

But what would happen if we could all get along? The result would be unbreakable unity, and it would get the attention of a world that, despite its best efforts, simply cannot get along.

**We value unbreakable unity and expect each member to defend our family, our vision, and our leaders with tenacity, truth, and grace.**

Let's take a closer look at what unity isn't, what it is, and what it does.

#### 1. What unity is not:

Sometimes the best way to define a term is to talk about what it DOESN'T mean, and unity is one of those terms that seems to mean a lot of things to a lot of people. Here are a few of the things that it isn't:

- a. A cult - when people appear unified but are really brainwashed
- b. A dictatorship - when people appear unified but are really afraid
- c. A pact - when people appear unified but are really untrusting
- d. A feeling - when people appear unified but are really just quiet (avoiding conflict)
- e. A goal - when people appear unified but are really just focused (temporary)
- f. All of these are external. They try to achieve unity by outside methods, but they ultimately fail because the most important thing about unity is that it's not possible without Jesus
  - i. Ephesians uses the phrase "in Christ" or similar phrases 36 times
  - ii. Everything Paul "urges" the Ephesians to do in chapter 4 is based on them being "a prisoner for the Lord"

#### 2. What unity is:

- a. A by-product
  - i. It comes from within, from hearts that have been yielded to and changed by Jesus
  - ii. In other words, unity isn't something we try to get, but rather something we're given
  - iii. It isn't your unity or mine, but "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3)

- iv. By-products happen naturally as a cause and effect
- v. If this, then this
- vi. 2 Corinthians 5:17 talks about a cause (we're new creations) and that leads to a natural effect (unity)
- vii. Like the women of The Gathering wanting to get together (unity as a by-product) instead of a program driving them to (unity as a goal)
- viii. This is why the NT church was together so much
- ix. We can't fathom that because to most of us unity is a goal, not a by-product
- b. A tapestry
  - i. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
  - ii. Many parts. One body.
  - iii. It's ok to be different! (1 Peter 3:8 - "one mind" literally means harmonious, which is different notes making a beautiful sound)
  - iv. How can we be different yet live in harmony?
  - v. By understanding the way the body works
  - vi. All the parts grew from one cell; they weren't put together like a car or a Mr. Potato Head
  - vii. But the parts are not "add-ons"; they aren't meant to be interchangeable or disposable
  - viii. They are held in place by the "bond" of peace (Eph. 4:3)
    - a) literally - ligaments
    - b) Who is the peace? Jesus (Eph. 2:14 - He makes the 2 become 1!)
  - ix. Red Rover is a great game and the way to win is to have the strongest arms linked to each other
  - x. But what if a steel rod could run through each participant so that it looked more like foosball? That team would never lose!
  - xi. Believers have that common bond knitting them together (Eph. 4:16) which allows each part to be different and yet one
- c. A testimony
  - i. This is why unity in the body is such a powerful testimony to a world that can only produce billion dollar riots
  - ii. John 17:21 says there is nothing more powerful that we can do to help the world believe that Jesus was sent to them
  - iii. John 13:34-35 - how we love each other reveals whose disciples we are
- d. A challenge
  - i. It's hard, and that shouldn't surprise us
  - ii. That's why Jesus prayed for it 4 times in His final prayer for His disciples
  - iii. We are people of different tastes, opinions, preferences
  - iv. It's easy to let those divide us, but that is what our enemy wants
  - v. Eph. 6:11 - know his schemes
    - a) John 10:10 (kill, steal, destroy - all focused on dividing)
    - b) Matthew 12:30 (Jesus gathers, His enemies scatter)
    - c) A good rule of thumb? If it pushes you apart from believers, it's not God
    - d) Satan pushes apart; Jesus pulls together
  - vi. Doesn't mean we always agree or even stay together, but that we keep the unity of the Spirit even when we do
    - a) Acts 15:36-41
    - b) Separated, but both still went in grace to minister
    - c) We'll talk more about this in the coming weeks

3. What unity does
  - a. It provides incredible confidence in prayer (Matt 18:19 - “agree” from root for symphony)
  - b. It creates the environment for training in ministry (Eph. 4:11-16)
  - c. It creates a fierce loyalty to one another (Gal. 6:2)
    - i. I mentioned Lou Holtz last week and how he used stories to help turn around the South Carolina Gamecocks from 0 wins to 8 wins in one season
    - ii. He also asks every team member 3 questions: Can I trust you? Are you committed? Do you care about me?
    - iii. A “yes” to each of those creates an unbreakable unity, and Jesus helps us answer yes to them
  - d. It validates the mission of Jesus (John 17:21) because the reconciled actually live reconciled (2 Cor. 5:18)

#### The Landing

- The subject of Christian unity is huge, and because of how it validates (or invalidates) the message of Jesus, we shouldn't be surprised that it is the first thing Satan would attack in believers.
- He wants to divide our churches, our families, our marriages
- But communion is one way to remind ourselves that Jesus came to give us a common union, and keeping the unity that the Spirit has placed in us is worth the fight
- Let's take communion this morning as one band of believers