

THE BIG IDEA: Blessing GOES where unity FLOWS.

The Take-Off

First, let me say what an amazing job Jason did last week. We are BLESSED as a body to have such gifted teachers!

My guess is that many of us found a new appreciation for prayer and what actually happens as we use it.

In fact, this entire series is allowing us to take a look at HOW we should stand, because we already know from

Ephesians 6:13 that we are called to stand.

Too many times, churches and pastors are guilty of telling us what to do, but not how to do it.

STAND is about learning HOW to stand.

In the first week, we said we are called to stand IN - and we do that by being obedient. Simple obedience leads to supernatural outcomes (something we'll experience later today). Gideon was a great example of that.

But we also stand UP, and that's what Jason did such a great job showing us last week. It is in prayer that we reach UP into the heavenly places to find the heart of God, and that changes our perspective on what we're facing here on earth.

Remember the quote from Tim Keller that was last week's Big Idea? "Prayer is not merely a way to get things from God but a way to get more of God." We stand UP in prayer to get the heart of God.

And now, this morning we'll learn that we are called to stand WITH one another in unity, and we'll spend the majority of our time in one of the shortest Psalms in the Bible, but it says a TON in its 3 verses.

While you're turning to **Psalm 133**, let's see if we can come up with a definition of unity that will allow us to be on the same page this morning.

You can find tons of definitions of unity - and then more for Christian unity - but for today, let's say that unity happens when ALL OF US give ALL WE CAN for ALL OF HIM.

Same team (all of us), same commitment (all we can), same goal (Jesus!).

That's Christian unity, and we can learn quite a bit about it in **Psalm 133**, so let's start there.

1. Unity is good (v. 1)

- a. Let's not overlook the obvious - when we live in unity, the Bible says that's a good thing
- b. The word used to describe it is "pleasant"
- c. I'm not sure where you would say your pleasant place is - maybe the beach, the mountains, in a big chair with a big blanket and a big cup of coffee - but for the believer, unity is that place.
- d. It doesn't mean that it's easily obtained or kept, but it does mean that it's a good place to be!

2. Unity is for the church (v. 1)

- a. Sometimes we get all worked up about how people can't seem to get along, but unity isn't the same thing as world peace or everyone grabbing a Coke and singing kumbaya!
- b. Unity is something that is intended among believers - "how good it is when BROTHERS live together..."
- c. **John 17:23** / Jesus knew it was important - a sign to the world of who HE was - COMPLETE unity
- d. **1 Corinthians 1:10** / Paul literally BEGGED the church to live in unity - He knew the importance of it
- e. Christian unity is so much more than just our church getting along - it is brothers and sisters in the kingdom remembering that we are on the same team with the same commitment to the same goal (Jesus glorified!)
- f. Some of my brothers: Larry, Bob, Andy, Bryan, Kevin, Brad, Jay, Jeff, Mike, Stoney
- g. All of them pastor churches - most of them in our city.
- h. How good it is when BROTHERS live together in unity - when churches stop competing and start serving together to bring a city to Jesus!
- i. Let's take a few minutes to pray for these pastors and these churches before we go any further.
- j. If we only work together to build our church, we don't have the unity Jesus prayed for.

3. Unity is more relational than informational (v. 1)

- a. Unity is not simply looking alike and thinking alike
- b. Unity is about the heart being one more than the mind being one
- c. Unity is more about being together more than agreeing together

- d. When I truly know you and your heart, I am much more likely to stand with you even if I don't fully agree with you.
- e. Unity happens as we do life together, and that is so important because we're going to have to fight to protect unity, and we then to fight harder for people than for ideas.
- f. **Ephesians 4:3** / Paul calls us to give our BEST effort as we maintain the unity of the spirit

4. Unity allows the Spirit to flow freely (v. 2)

- a. You can't read verse 2 and not picture things flowing
- b. Unity allows the Spirit to flow freely.
- c. Oil was used to anoint the priests, and oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit that covers us when we're unified
- d. Seeing Pastor Gunn get oil poured over him - everything got covered!
- e. Unity fills the gaps between us, eases frictions, GRACE, GRACE, GRACE!!!

5. Unity positions us for God's blessings (v. 3)

- a. What happens when unity flows? We receive God's blessings!
- b. Unity is the place that God commands His blessings.
- c. That's the picture of Hermon - it is the highest mtn. in Israel and the land below it one of the most fertile and lush
- d. Why? Because the water flows down the mountain and to the land beneath it
- e. The valley is blessed by the water from the mountain, and in the same way, we're blessed in unity
- f. That's the Big Idea: **blessing goes where unity flows.**
- g. Want to stop the blessing? Put up walls and barriers. Hoard. Cause division.
- h. That stops the flow of unity, and removes the blessings that we so desperately need.

The Landing

Where does unity flow the freest?

At the cross, the place where Jesus - according to **Ephesians 2:14** - destroyed the wall of sin that kept us divided

The Greek word for "destroyed" literally means "to deprive of authority"

That means that Jesus made unity possible by making it impossible for external things to keep us apart.

Unless we allow them to.

Several centuries ago, ancient China wanted to secure its borders from its northern invaders. They had an ingenious plan. They built a great wall to protect the border. It was so thick that no one could knock it down. It was so long that no one could get around it. They posted soldiers at different places. It was built wide enough on the top for chariots to patrol. If they heard of an attack at distant location, they could easily get to it. They were up high giving them a superior advantage over their enemies. They knew that they had protected their borders sufficiently against all enemies.

But, in the first 100 years of the Great Wall of China, the nation was invaded three times. How? An enemy bribed the gatekeeper and entered into the land undetected.

When we diminish the importance of unity in the body of Christ, we risk being invaded by the enemy. God has called us to divine fellowship. That fellowship is one of the most powerful tools of witness to a lost and dying world. If we don't protect it, strive for it, and do everything we can to promote it, we open the gate to the enemy. The enemy will attack your family and your church, causing ineffectiveness and destruction.

That's what can happen when we don't take unity seriously.

But when we do? Nothing is impossible!

[Video - Coach Carter / Push ups]

Same team, giving the same commitment to the same goal.

When that happens, unity flows, and **blessing goes where unity flows.**

Let's pray.