

Examining Christian Disunity: Five Ways to Promote Unity

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At the beginning of the series I shared a concern I've often heard from skeptics: "Why should I seriously consider Christian truth-claims when Christendom is so deeply divided?"

Christians, in fact, share many essential beliefs, values, and worldview orientation. Still, there are steps that can be taken to promote greater unity among Christ's church (in [last week's](#) post I offered two suggestions for achieving this goal).

The final article in this series offers five points that I try to emphasize when interacting with people from different denominations or branches of Christendom. Promotion of unity among various Christian traditions can significantly strengthen the integrity of the Gospel message to a skeptical world.

1. Emphasize Common Ground

Before discussing controversial doctrinal differences, let's first look at the doctrinal common ground.

Working at Reasons To Believe affords me many opportunities to speak on apologetics topics to a variety of denominations. Over the last couple of years I have spoken in Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Assembly of God, Evangelical Free, Seventh-day Adventist, and various nondenominational churches.

I try to find common ground when speaking with Christians whose theological flavor varies from my own. Often times I'll mention what C. S. Lewis called "Mere Christianity" and intentionally reference the Apostles' Creed because it does such an excellent job of summarizing essential Christianity. (Various denominations recite this creed as part of their church service.). Additionally, I focus on the person of Jesus Christ—emphasizing his life, death, and resurrection.

2. Acknowledge Leaders and Accomplishments

When speaking at Lutheran churches, I relay my respect and admiration for Martin Luther (1483–1546) and will often note the Latin "*solas*" of the Reformation (which emphasize that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone). I will even quote from the Lutheran *Formula of Concord* or *Luther's Small Catechism*.

When addressing congregants in a Methodist church, I mention John Wesley (1703–1791). Though myself a Calvinist, I like to convey to my Methodist friends that Wesley embraced a

grace-oriented theology. You see, even Calvinist and Arminian Christians (historically theological competitors) can respect and complement one another.

3. Support Solid Ministry Endeavors

I will donate to ministries that are outside of my own theological tradition if they are engaged in solid works of ministry. For example, though some of the Salvation Army's theological distinctiveness are at odds with my own, I support their efforts because they are the best at what they do.

Similarly, I am very impressed with the health organizations sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I differ strongly with Adventist theology at various points, but their emphasis on health and wellness is hard to beat. When I discover ministries engaged in important work, I acknowledge and support them, regardless of their theological branches within Christendom.

4. Think of Other Christian Traditions as Worldview Allies

As an evangelical Protestant, I have strong and enduring theological differences with Roman Catholicism. Yet when it comes to such ethical issues like abortion, euthanasia, and embryonic stem cell research, I respect the "culture of life" that the Pope so eloquently speaks about and cogently defends. I view theologically conservative Catholics as being worldview allies when it comes to many of the controversial ethical issues of the day. Even Protestants and Catholics (at one time enemies) can respect each other and engage in common causes.

5. Be Gracious

Christians from my tradition (Reformed or Calvinistic) are known for their strong convictions. A Reformed Christian often knows what he or she believes and why. On the other hand, we Calvinists can sometimes come across as rather pugnacious or quarrelsome.

My goal is to be a winsome and gracious Christian who holds to a Reformed theology. I take it as a complement when people say I am a "nice or charitable Calvinist." And no, that's not an oxymoron.

These are five suggestions that can help promote unity among Christians of various traditions. That unity can help illustrate to the world that Christians treat each other with love and respect because God has first loved us in Christ.

For a principled call for reunion among evangelical church bodies, see John M. Frame's [*Evangelical Reunion*](#).

For more on the essential beliefs, values, and worldview orientation of historic Christianity, see my two books [*Without a Doubt*](#) and [*A World of Difference*](#).

Subjects: Christian Life, General Apologetics