

# The need for unity in the church

by [Matt Slick](#)

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"Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose," ([Phil. 2:2](#)).

One of the signs of apostasy (falling from the truth) in the Christian Church is the bickering and disunity among Christians. Jesus said that the world would know that we were His disciples by the love that we have for one another ([John 13:35](#)). In [Col. 3:14](#), it says that love is the perfect bond of unity. The New Testament speaks about us being unified in Christ ([Eph. 4:5](#)). In response to Christians who follow after individuals rather than Jesus, Paul says that Christ is not divided ([1 Cor. 1:12-13](#)). Though Christ is not divided, His body of believers is. Divisions in the Christian church can be a healthy and necessary thing: "For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you," ([1 Cor. 11:19](#)). But too much of a good thing isn't good.

It is all right to have differences of opinion on the non-essential matters like worship styles or days, pre-trib rapture, post-trib rapture, Arminianism, Calvinism, etc. Whether you believe one or the other, do not affect salvation. Yet far too many Christians use these non-essential differences as justification for division and sometimes even insight anger. When this occurs, the love of God in our hearts is sacrificed to our pride. Instead of saying to one another, "I am right and you are wrong," we should be saying something like, "It is certainly possible that you are correct. Now, let's work together to glorify God and expand His kingdom." Perhaps this is too simplistic, but at least it displays an attitude of humility that helps to bring unity. It is the devil that wants us to fall into the self abuse of division and bickering.

## Sometimes apostasy means remaining united

There is a time for division in the body of Christ. When an individual or a church group is denying clear scripture and remains unrepentant after being admonished, then it is time to break fellowship with that group. Such is the case with the Metropolitan Community Church denomination which openly advocates the support of homosexuality. Also, the Evangelical Lutheran church is in risk of apostasy by entertaining the idea of accepting homosexual relationships into church as is also the case with United Church of Christ: "The United Church of Christ set up a \$500,000 scholarship fund for gay and lesbian seminarians Friday and urged wider acceptance of homosexuals by other denominations." (United Church Makes Gay Scholarship, CLEVELAND, Jun 16, 2000, AP Online via COMTEX). Or "The supreme court of the United Methodist Church was asked Thursday to reconsider the denomination's ban on gay clergy. (*Church court of United Methodists asked to decide on gay clergy ban*, NASHVILLE, Tennessee, Oct 25, 2001, AP WorldStream via COMTEX). Such movements by churches toward accepting in Christianity are clearly a sign of apostasy. If they don't believe God's word in such a fundamental issue, how can they be trusted to understand God's word in other issues?

Church groups like this are in open rebellion against God and His word and it would not only be prudent, but it would be biblical to not fellowship with these groups.

## What is it that unites us?

Primarily, it is the saving work of Christ that unites us. Secondly, it is the essential doctrines that define orthodoxy. We have, as a common heritage, the blood of Christ that has been shed for the forgiveness of our sins. True Christians serve the true and living God and we know Jesus in a personal and intimate way ([1 Cor. 1:9](#)). We have been redeemed by God himself. Furthermore, we have the body of Scriptures which tell us the essentials of the faith and deviating from these essentials means to be outside the camp of Christ. It is the essential doctrines that we must know and unite in.

Why then, for all practical purposes, do we elevate the non-essential to the place of essentials? I believe it is because of immaturity and pride in various Christians. Should we not sacrifice our "perfect" opinion on a biblical matter for being gracious to another brother or sister in Christ? Of course we should, but when that doesn't happen, we have denominational splits. I cannot see how such a huge fragmentation in the Christian Church in denominations and sects glorifies God.

The Christian church, as a whole, needs to repent. We need to look at ourselves. We need to look at our churches. We need to look at one another and decide that we will stand on the essential doctrines of the faith and that we will be united against the enemy. Those of us who are united by the blood of Christ are not enemies with one another whether we be Presbyterian or Baptist or Lutheran. It may be difficult for many of us to look lovingly into the eyes of those of a different denomination without thinking in our hearts that they are wrong about this doctrine or that doctrine. But, we need to be reminded that there is neither a Presbyterian nor a Baptist nor a Lutheran on the throne of God. All of us I am sure, will have our theologies corrected when we stand before the throne of God. Therefore, we need to seek to work together to further the Kingdom of God.

[Romans 14:1-12](#) speaks about accepting Christians of differing opinions and to not judge them because, "To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind...But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God," ([Rom. 14:4-5,10](#)). The whole point is that we need to be united, not bickering. We need to move beyond the denominational barriers of what separates us into the common ground of what unites us: Jesus!

Ask yourself what is most important in life. Is it your relationship with God? If it is, and it should be, should you not also be seeking the same thing that God wants? Should you not also be seeking to love one another as Christ commanded us? Love is the perfect bond of unity, ([Col. 3:14](#)).

Apostasy begins in our hearts when we put distance between ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ because of a difference of opinion on a non-essential doctrine. Apostasy means that we fall away from the truth. This falling away can be complete or it can be slight. Let's not commit apostasy in our hearts by abandoning the truth of God's call of unity and love within the body of Christ. Remember, it is the devil that wants us to fight each other so that he can be freed up to deceive the world. If we are fighting each other then we are falling prey to His tactics.

I know that it is easy to speak these words and it is very difficult to apply them. That is true because true love is difficult to live. But what if the world began to see the Christian Church uniting in spite of its differences? What if the world started to see how the Christian Church started to love not only their own church members but other church members? What do you think the world would say if the churches' bickering stopped? What do you think the unbelievers would say if they saw us living more and more the loving attitude and a sacrificial life of Christ across denominational barriers? It would be a tremendous witness for Christ. It would be a tremendous assault on the enemy and I know that God would use it mightily to bring others to Himself by his grace.

Apostasy begins with the individual. Apostasy begins in the heart and the mind. Whichever comes first is not important. Whether we think something wrong and then feel it or feel something wrong and then think it. The heart and the mind are so closely related that we must guard them both. We must focus on the truth of God's word and let our minds be shaped by it. We must seek to have our minds shaped by the love of God as we move not only to learn about Him, but also to carry out His desires.

## **What should we do to bring unity wherever possible?**

We need to look at our own hearts and our own minds and compare them to Jesus and the Scripture. Where ever the two are not in agreement, it is we who need to change. We need to pray that the Lord would provide opportunities to work with other Christians across denominational lines. We need to recognize that we have differences of opinions and worship styles and that that is okay. But we need to lift each other up and be united in Christ.

About The Author

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