Unified - Part 2
"The Power of Unity!"
August 25th, 2024

Intro:

- Reintroduce Series - How Unity is Possible in a World that is SO Divided!

- There are 1,000 diff. things we can be Divided on, & yet, Jesus called us as His followers to Live in Unity!!! (Final Prayer - John 17)

- So, as we face another election season & prepare to Launch our DTL, we knew God wanted us to look at what the Bible has to say about being Unified!

- Today: "The Power of Unity!"

PRAY

- ? Did you ever play the game "Red Rover, Red Rover???"

- When the team locked their arms & were unified, it was almost impossible to break through, wasn't it???

- 2 things I remember:

1) We'd look for the weakest link! 2) We'd leave bruises on their arms!!!

- Unity is a Powerful thing, but it can be used for Good or Bad!

- We see this in our world today big time!

- Peo. Being brought "together" b/c of what they are AGAINST!

- Sadly, too many "Christians" are getting caught up in it.

4 Thoughts on the Power of Unity:

1. We must be So Careful about what we allow to "Unify" us.

A. There are a Million things that we can "Unify" around!

- Many of them are "Neutral" or "Not Bad."

- Sports / Fashion / Cars / Hobbies / Kids / Etc.

B. However, the Trick of the Devil in our World today is to get us "Unified" around the Wrong Things.

- The Least Common Denominator of "Unity" is Negativity!

- This is a Tactic of the Enemy!!!

- If he can get us "Unified" around something Negative than he can gain access to our heart!

C. Tower of Babel ILL. - The people Unified around the Wrong Thing.

Genesis 11:1 "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech."
v. 3-4 "They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves…" (be like God)

- God sees them Unified around the Wrong thing & steps in…

v. 5-6 "But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, "If <u>as one people</u> speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then <u>nothing they plan to do</u> will be impossible for them."

- IOW, God knew that if they used their Unity for the Wrong thing, it could bring a lot of destruction!!!

v. 7 "Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

2. The Devil's goal is to get us "Unified" <u>AGAINST</u> Something, & specifically someone… <u>a "THEY!"</u>

- Whoever "THEY" are!!!

- The Other Party / The Other Team / Another Race / Poor People / Homeless People / People who are not Like us / our "Out Group."

- IOW, Anyone we don't Understand.

A. Jude is writing to warn the church about divisive people who slip in <u>*to the church*</u>, btw, & he says…

Jude 1:10 "Yet these people slander <u>whatever they do not understand</u>…"

B. Church - We have to be SO CAREFUL, that we are not lending our Unity to Negativity!

- When we don't understand something or someone, our natural sin nature tendency is to Dog it, Slander it, & Tear it down.
    - This is why we keep Encouraging you to Not be afraid of conversations w/ people who are not like you!
    - B/c behind the "Issue we are against," or "don't understand," are REAL PEOPLE that Jesus died for w/ a Real Story & a Real Life!!!
        - IMMIGRATION - JESUS WAS AN IMMIGRANT
            - Not just Heaven, but Egypt as well!
- I'm not saying Immigration isn't a complex issue, what I am saying is that behind every issue are PEOPLE!!! (5 ELT & LP's or Spouses - 27%)
    - When we get to know THEM, we are living like Jesus!

C. POINT: An Unbelieving world will not be drawn to what we are Against, they are drawn to what we are FOR!!!

Paul is writing to the Followers of Jesus in Rome who have gotten all caught up in their Petty Focuses & have become Distracted…

Romans 14:17 "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,"

- IOW, don't get caught up in all this "what you are against…" stuff.
- Instead, let righteousness, peace & joy attract those on the outside!

V. 19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food."

(your issue!)

- It's possible to destroy the work of God by focusing or being United around the Wrong Thing!!!

3. The Kind of Church God can Bless is a Unified Church that looks like Heaven.

A. The Church of Jesus was born in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost.

- At the Very Beginning of the Church, God makes it clear what He wants His church to look like.
- & Essentially, He says, "If you'll look like this, I will bless you & put my favor on you!!!"

B. Peter / Day of Pentecost / 120 Upper Room / They think they're drunk

Acts 2:16-17 "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.
v. 18 "Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

B. Right here, at the Beginning of the Church, we see God Eradicate all Ageism, Sexism, Racism & Classism!!!

- This is the Unity God intended His Church to have from the Beginning!!!

1) Racism.

v. 16 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

A. It doesn't say that God's Spirit will only come on white people, or black people, or Hispanic people or Asian people or middle eastern people.

B. That means at the very beginning of the Church, God wanted everyone to know that "All People are Welcome! All People are Called to Experience Salvation! And All people are called to Proclaim the Good News of Jesus!!!"

- It says "All People!"

C. I'm so thankful that we are Diverse Church! I LOVE the Diversity of our church!

- SARAH & I GREW UP - 97% white!

- Our heart was for diversity, but we were ignorant & didn't understand so much!

- 9 yrs ago, God took us on a Great Journey & I'm so glad He did!!!

D. Black People - We are So Glad you're Here, we see you, we honor where you've come from & your struggle!

- Hispanic People - We see you, we love your heritage & your language! (& your music!)

"Te vemos. Te amamos. Amamos tu herencia, tu idioma y tu musica! Oren por mi mientras estoy aprendiendo su idioma."

- Asian People - Welcome, we see & honor you & are so glad you're here!

E. Whatever you look like & wherever you come from, we want you to know that there is No Ceiling for you here!

- This is the church we've always dreamed of!!!

F. SWFL Statistics:

- <u>2020</u> <u>SWFL STATISTICS</u>

- 9% - Black - 3% - Asian / Mixed Race / Other

- 22% - Hispanic - 66% - White

- Our Church should reflect our community!!! I'm so glad it does!

2) Sexism.

V. 17 "Your <u>sons and daughters</u> will prophesy…"

A. God makes it very clear right here at the birthplace of the church that His Daughters are allowed to Preach & Prophecy & Proclaim the good news of Jesus!!!

- The Church is not an All Men, Good Old Boys Club!

- Not according to God!

- www.NLC.com/women

B. I'm so thankful for the Daughters God has raised up in this House!

- We believe every woman has a right to lead & shepherd & preach & teach at any capacity around here!

- I love our Sisterhood Culture!

- I love our Women Pastors!

C. Ladies: We have paid a price for this here in our church!

- Let me be more clear: My wife & I have paid a huge price for this!

- 7 YEARS AGO: A MAN HANDED ME A LETTER... Sarah preached

- *"I know you believe what I believe, that woman shouldn't preach..."*

- Actually sir, I don't! But I had never said that overtly, out loud to our church!

- At that point, Sarah had been leading in our church for 14 years, but when we gave her the title of "Co-Lead Pastor" & she preached that weekend, that was the line!

- I stood up for what God's Word said & that was a dividing line for our church!

D. And we lost about 100 people & one of our male pastors when my wife & other women started to lead & pastor & be empowered around here!!!

- But daughters, I'm just telling you, You are worth it!!!

- B/c God established the church with Daughters Prophesying!!!

3) Ageism.

v. 17b "your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams."

A. When God established the Church, He wanted the world to know that young & old alike were welcome!

- Young Men - See Visions! - Old Men - Dream Dreams!

B. OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE VISION!!!

- Plant Churches / Launch Locations / Start Ministries!!!

- HARPS - NOT FOR US - MUSIC IS TOO LOUD BUT WE LOVE IT

- They dreamed of a church like this 22 years ago!!!

C. This is a Church for every generation!!!

- If you're older, we need you!

- We need your wisdom! We need your financial support!

- We need your Experience!!!
- We need your belief in us!!!

v. 18 "Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

4) Classism.

A. At the Foundation of the Church, God wanted to make sure that everyone knew, no matter what your socio-economic class is, you're welcome here & there's a place for you in the preaching of the gospel!!!

- **I'm so thankful that every week, we have people who are multi-millionaires sitting right next to people who live in Government Housing.**
- **? Do you know how beautiful that is in God's eyes' church???**

B. THIS IS THE VISION FOR OUR DOWNTOWN LOC BTW!!!

- **It's not just Dunbar, it's from McGregor to I-75!!!**
- **Yes, it includes those in Govt. Housing, but it also includes those living in High Rise Condos on the River & off Old McGregor!!!**

*** This is the Kind of Church God can bless!!!**

- **A Unified Church with No Racism / Sexism / Ageism or Classism!!!**
  - **God's Church is a church for everyone regardless of class or income level or the neighborhood you come from!**
  - **We are the church of Jesus Christ & we are FOR everyone!!!**

4. God commands a Blessing when there is Unity around the Right Things.

Psalm 133:1 "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers (& sisters) dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!"

v. 3 "It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore."

TIME OF PRAYER & COMMITMENT

1. ? Have you been giving your “Unity” to Negativity? Repent

2. How do you need to give your “Unity” to God’s House?

- **DTL - 100 More - Next Interest Mtg -**
- **Empowerment Track at your Location!**

Salvation

Prayer