Unified - Part 1
"How Unity is Possible…"
August 18th, 2024

Intro:

- DTL Update - Matching Gift… We want 100% Participation at every level!

- Wow, is our World Divided again!!!
- **The Political Season is in Full Force & it's getting ugly out there!**
- **Not just Politics, but there any Number of Dozens of issues Rt. Now, that you & I can choose to let Divide us!**
  - **Isreal, Gaza & Palestine / Ukraine / Inflation / AI / Racial Tensions / The Assassination Attempt of F.P. Trump / How Kamala Harris came to be the Candidate / CNN or Fox News / China / Immigration / Drilling for Oil / Abortion / Mother's Rights / Baby's Rights / Black & White Issues / Equality / The Economy**
    - **I could go On & On & On!!!**
- **Anybody Stressed yet?!?**
  - **And yet, this is the Reality we are living every time we pick up our Phone / Scroll / or Watch the News!**

- NOW… Here's the Dichotomy for us as Followers of Jesus…
- **Jesus' Final Prayer for us was that we would Live & Walk UNIFIED!!!**
  - **Let me show you…**

John 17:20-21 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for <u>those who will believe in me</u> through their message, that <u>all of them may be one</u>, Father, just as you are in Me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

v. 22-23 "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that <u>they may be one as we are one</u>—I in them and you in me—so that <u>they may be brought to complete unity</u>. Then <u>the world will know that you sent me</u> and have loved them even as you have loved me."

- Jesus says "the world will know about HIM," by the Unity they see in us!

- ? How is that possible? ? Is it EVEN possible in our world today?

- I believe it is, & for the next 3 weeks, I want us talk about that!

PRAY

- Why this Matters: This Fall we are not only walking through another Election Season, but we are Launching our 4th Location in Downtown FM!

- & Diversity is 1 of the Amazing Distinctives of NLC!

- There is Beauty in our Diversity & God wants ALL of us to embrace it, not just those who are Called to "Go Downtown!"

- Now, the Minute someone brings up the Topic of Race, Diversity & Unity we all get a little Squirmy, don't we? Why?

- White People - Deathly afraid of being called or labeled Racist!

- Black / Hispanic / Asia - Afraid of Feeling Unwanted / Unsafe / Inferior or Ostracized in some way!

- Which means, most of us just want to "Not talk about it!"

- After all, if we don't talk about it, then it's not so bad, right?!?

- But that doesn't work in any other area of our life, does it?

- ISSUES IN MARRIAGE / FINDING A LUMP / UNOPENED BILLS

- CHECK ENGINE LIGHT / UNDERPERFORMING EMPLOYEE

- Ignoring Hard Things never makes them Better.

Hosea 4:6 "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."

- See, Unity is NOT Uniformity!

- Unity in the Family of God is: "Strength through our Differences!"

- SCIENTIFIC FACT: ALLOY METAL IS STRONGER THAN PURE METAL

"Metal alloys are made up of differing atoms, unlike pure metal, where the atoms are all the same. This makes it harder for the atoms to move around

in metal alloys, which is why they are typically much stronger and harder than pure metals."

- We become the answer to Jesus' Prayer for Unity when we find <u>Strength through our differences</u>, not when we find <u>*Division through our differences*</u>!!!

<u>? So where do we start?</u> ? Is Unity even Possible today?

- I believe it is, but it doesn't start "Out There," it starts in HERE (In our Hearts as Individuals!)

- We can be the Answer to Jesus' Prayer!

<u>What it Takes to be Unified as His Followers:</u>

1. Teachability. * Being Teachable!

A. <u>2 Definitions of Teachability:</u>

1) A desire to learn & a willingness to change.

- What's your numbers right now?

2) Being willing to relearn that which we think we already know.

B. So, when it comes to 1 of the Issues I mentioned above…

? Are we willing to learn something or Relearn something we didn't know before or thought we *already* knew???

C. PETER STORY…

- There's a story in the Bible where Peter actually believed he knew better than Jesus... It happened at the Last Supper!!!

John 13:4-5 "He (Jesus) got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

v. 6-8 "He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "<u>you shall never</u> wash my feet."

(Lack of Teachability)

v. 8b-9 "Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” “Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

- Peter thought he knew better than Jesus!

- He was obstinate - *NO Jesus! You're not allowed to wash my feet!*

- But when Jesus showed him a Different Way, he was open & teachable & said, *"Then wash all of me!"*

- Peter gives us a Model for what it's going to take to be in Unity.

D. MIP: Church Family - Are we Teachable & Willing to Learn something new / even more, something we THINK we already know?

2. Humility.

A. When Peter was faced w/ info & a perspective he didn't know before & hadn't thought of before, he was Humble enough to admit it.

- So many of the Issues facing our World today are Happening b/c of a Lack of Humility in the Hearts of People.

- We have to lay our Pride aside if we are ever going to hope to find a place of Unity.

B. MIP:? Are we willing to humble ourselves before God and others and admit there may be things we don’t know?

- About our spouse? Other races? The Other Party?

- About People’s Background & Culture?

I Corinthians 8:1b "Knowledge inflates with pride, but love builds up."

- IOW, when we think we know, that's when pride sets in, but Love plays it different!

- Love leaves People & us BETTER than we were before!!!

- That's Teachability & Humility!!!

- This is what is wrong in our Culture today!

- We think we know / If you don’t agree w/ me, I cancel you!

C. Jesus didn’t CANCEL Peter, He taught him & made him a Backbone of His Movement!!!

- People who don't Look like us / Think about Issues like us / Believe like us, aren't our Enemy, they are our Mission Field!!!

3. Maturity.

A. Peter wanted to be like Jesus more than he wanted to be Right.

- That's why he said, "Wash my whole body."
  - MIP: ? Can that be said of us?

B. *"True Spiritual Maturity is holding on to opposing thoughts at the same time and not losing our Peace or Identity in the process." - MWK*

- True Spiritual Maturity says: *"My entire existence isn't threatened b/c we don't agree!"*
  - *"My worldview isn't shattered b/c you and I don't agree."*
    - This is why we Cancel each other, but...
      - It doesn't have to be that way.

C. When we agree that "Jesus is the way, the truth, & life," then we can Vote Differently & still be in Unity!

- We can come from Diff. Backgrounds & Ethnic Experiences & still be in Unity.

D. True Maturity says, *"I don't see it how you do, but I Respect & Honor your point of view."* - That's what we're going for!

- Immaturity - Name Calls / Belittles / Dismisses / Swears at / Degrades someone else b/c their point of view & Life Experience is Different than mine.

4. Empathy.

A. Jesus knew that if Peter didn't understand Empathy, then he would never be able to live in a Post-Resurrection world!

- Empathy is a Backbone to our Christian Faith!
  - We, as Christians, are called to Empathy & Compassion.

John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- Not our buildings / bumper stickers / politics / tshirts / or great ch. services

B. When we Empathize with Someone we Enter their World and Validate their Story.

**** To validate someone else's story does not in any way diminish our story, it just makes us like Jesus.**

- In that moment, it's not about us!

C. "I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHAT ITS LIKE TO BE A PASTOR" ILL.

- I can't imagine having 1,000's of eyes & opinions & people judging and scrutinizing you every week.

- When he said it, I teared up!!! Why?!?

- B/c he entered my world & cared about my pain!

- You can't possibly understand what it's like to be me, but I'm so grateful you see what I've experienced!

D. That's what Jesus did... In order to be in relationship with us, He came down, entered our world and felt our pain!

- Aren't we so glad, He did!?!

- He's simply called us to do the same with those whose stories are like us AND with those whose stories aren't.

Teachability / Humility / Maturity / Empathy

- This is the Path Forward for us, why? B/c it is the Way of Jesus!!!

2 Practical Challenges:

1. Go out of your way to have a Conversation w/ someone who doesn't look like you or have your background.

- Black Person / White Person / Poor Person / Homeless Person / Hispanic Person / Gay Person / Man or Woman

- Ask them, "What was it like growing up as you? In your neighborhood? w/ your parents? In your school? w/ your income level?

- If they're a person of faith, pray together / have them pray for you!

- Now… when you're done, Ask YOURSELF 2 Questions:
    1) What did I learn about someone different than me?
    2) What am I feeling inside right now?
        - Fear / Anger / Like my View of the World got Upended?
- Maturity is not letting someone else's "Different," upend our Identity.
    - Remember, our Differences don't Divide us they actually have the power to Strengthen us as Followers of Jesus!!!

2. Go to: www.NLC.com/unity www.NLC.com/politics

- Church - Being Unified is not only Possible, it is what Jesus asked us to do.
    - We are never more like Jesus than when we are getting outside of ourselves & entering into the Reality of someone else who is not like us!
        - He came from Heaven to Earth to do just that WITH US!!!

? How are you feeling? Take an Assessment of yourself right now…

TIME OF PRAYER - MERGE

"Everything I need, my Father has it…"