

UNITY - A key to experiencing God's commanded blessing



King David wrote,

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing –Life forevermore.” **(Psalm 133:1-3)**

- It is in the working together in unity with other believers that we see God's blessing and favour upon our lives and our churches



- Seeing Christians dwelling together in unity with one another is *very dear to the heart of God*. God loves to see Christians loving and caring for one another
- Before going to the cross and then ascending back to heaven, Jesus prayed for unity between all believers. We see this in the gospel of John

Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven,

“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.

They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.” **(John 17:6)** “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” **(John 17:9)**

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent Me.” **(John 17:20-21)**



“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22-23)



Jesus then continued to pray that God's love would be in the lives of all believers – A great key to seeing unity amongst all believers. We see this in John 17:25-26

Jesus prayed,

“O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” **(John 17:25-26)**



Jesus clearly emphasised that it was God's heart that all believers would have a great love for one another

Jesus also said to His disciples,
“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)**



So from these passages of Scripture we can see that love and unity amongst believers is very important to God

Why unity is so important to God?

1. Because our Christian witness is effective when people can see Christians loving one another and living together in unity



Jesus Himself said,

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)**

2) So that the world may believe that God sent His Son into the world to reconcile lost sinners to Himself. (God has given us the ministry of reconciliation – 2 Corinthians 5:18)



Jesus Himself said,

“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

(John 17:21)

3) That those in the world would know God's love for us through our unity and love for one another as believers



Jesus Himself said,

“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22-23)

4) Because like any father, God loves to see His children living together harmoniously and having a *genuine care and concern* for each other. This is clearly reflected in the Scriptures

The Apostle John wrote, “By this we know love, because he laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” **(1 John 3:16-18)**



5) Because God's heart is that all people would be saved (2 Peter 3:9) (1 Timothy 2:4)

It is working together in unity with other believers, each flowing in their own unique gifts and calling, that we can most effectively help to see those in the world come to Christ. We all have a part to play



The Apostle Paul wrote, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself IN LOVE.” (Ephesians 4:16) AND

6) God's heart is to see His Kingdom being expanded here on earth as we as believers love one another and help others to come to Christ.



Unity of the Spirit between believers is a great key to seeing God's Kingdom being expanded here on earth

**This is why the Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
(Ephesians 4:3)**

- For all of these reasons therefore, God does not look favourably upon those who sow strife and discord amongst believers

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“These six things the LORD hates,

Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.” **(Proverbs 6:16-19)**



- God's heart is to bless and favour His children in every way, and not just financially. That we in turn can be a blessing to others

- The Devil on the other hand only seeks to divide and to conquer and to destroy the lives of all people and particularly believers who have a heart to serve the Lord



Jesus Himself said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

- The Devil will continually try and sow strife and discord amongst believers to destroy the good things that God has planned for their lives
- Jesus clearly outlined the damaging consequences of allowing strife and disunity to enter into our homes and church fellowships



Jesus Himself said,

“Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25)

- The enemy will always target the weakest link
- It only takes one person to sow strife and discord into a church fellowship or in our homes and work places, to bring about disunity and to rob us of the blessings that we can all enjoy from dwelling together in unity with other believers



- So it is crucial for all believers this year to strive for the unity in our own homes and church fellowship meetings, so that we can ALL experience God's blessings and favour and power in our meetings in 2018 in a great way

- The Holy Spirit dwells in an atmosphere of faith, love and unity



- Strife and disunity is a great barrier to seeing God's tangible presence in our church meetings and in our homes



- Unity will be a key to seeing our lives and churches making a great difference in the lives of many this year. How we need God's tangible presence in all of our meetings in 2018, so that people can encounter Jesus Christ and be saved, healed and delivered through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Apostle Paul wrote, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

So given the importance of maintaining unity in our homes and church meetings, how can we individually help to keep this unity

I will now quickly finish with some keys that can help us to do so



1) That we grow deeper in our own love for Jesus so that we get His heart and love for people

- The more intimate we are in our relationship with the LORD, the more we will always have His heart to love and to reconcile with others
- As God is the source of all love, having a continual intimate and abiding relationship with the LORD is crucial



King David wrote, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

2) That we choose to esteem others better than ourselves

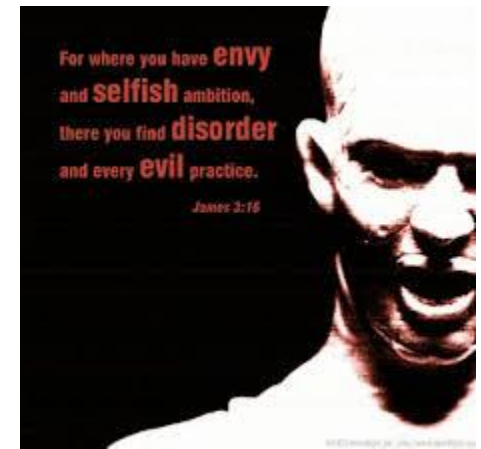
- This is a great key to keeping strife out of our own homes and church fellowship meetings

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” **(Philippians 2:3)**

- On the other hand strife will always be the outcome where people start to develop selfish ambition in their lives



In the book of James we read, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (James 3:13-16)



It is important that we continually CHOOSE to esteem others better than ourselves

3) That we continually look for the best in others

- God always sees the potential in all people
- We must always look for and AFIRM the good in others. We need to learn to see people the way that Jesus does
- We need to always appreciate the differences in others. God has created us all uniquely different



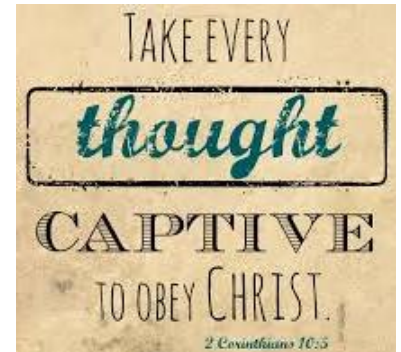
The Apostle Paul wrote, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another;” (Romans 12:10)

- The enemy, (the Devil) will always try and *magnify the faults in others* to get us thinking negatively about others so as to break down our relationships and to bring disunity into our homes and worship meetings
- **None of us are perfect**



This is why Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” **(Matthew 7:1-3)**

- It is so important that we CONTINUALLY look for the best in others and that we are always quick to take all wrong thoughts captive and to replace them with Christ centred thoughts.
- *Jesus has a great love for ALL people*



This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

4) That we are always quick to **CHOOSE** to **forgive and reconcile with others**

- Carrying offences in our heart will sabotage our relationships with others and cause us to be critical and judgemental towards people. It will also steal our intimacy in our walk with the Lord

This is why Jesus said, “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”
(Mark 11:25-26)



5) That we continually RENEW our mind
with the Word of God so that we have
Kingdom thinking in the way that we live and
relate to others



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **(Romans 12:2)**

- In a world full of ungodly and negative influences, it is crucial that we continually meditate on the Word of God so that we begin to *instinctively know how to relate to people* in a right and godly manner

The LORD said to Joshua,

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” **(Joshua 1:8)**



**6) That we have a heart to love, serve
and to encourage others to become
all that God has planned for their lives**



- Nurtured people become strong and healthy
- As Christians we need to be always looking for opportunities to love and encourage others. This is a great key to creating healthy Christian community in our Church fellowship meetings

The Apostle Peter wrote, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love covers a multitude of sins.”” (1 Peter 4:8)

- Giving words of encouragement to others helps to build them up and to create a good atmosphere in our homes and church meetings

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!” (Proverbs 15:23)

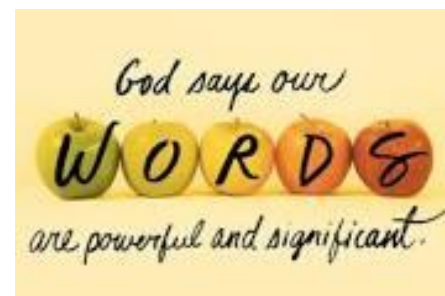


- We must always CHOOSE to use words that build others up and refuse to speak critical words that pull others down. There is great power in our Words to bring either unity or division into our meetings

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Proverbs 18:21)

**“Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.”
(Proverbs 16:24)**



- **Loving and *serving* others also helps to create a healthy atmosphere in our meetings, in which all people become mindful of the needs of others**

Jesus Himself said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” **(Matthew 20:25-28)**

There will be great unity in a church when all members have a heart to love, serve and to encourage others to become all that God has planned for their lives



7) That we always choose to treat others the way that we would like them to treat us,

- We need to always consider how would we like others to treat us.



This is why Jesus said, "... 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself...'" (Mark 12:31)

- Would I like to be spoken to in the manner that I speak to others and with the words that I use?
Would I want to be treated by others the way that I treat them?
- In doing this we will always be more respectful in the way that we relate to and speak to others

8) That we always live our lives for the team

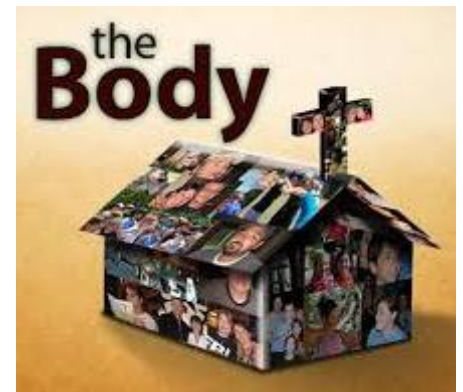
- That we always consider how we can best work together with others in our church to see our fellowship making a great difference in our world for ETERNITY
- Every believer has a significant part to play in the Body of Christ
- We all need one another in the Body of Christ. We will be the greatest blessing when we simply faithfully do what God has called us to do, with a heart to be a blessing to the Body of Christ



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.” **(1 Corinthians 14:12)**

- If all members of a church have a heart to serve others within their fellowship with their spiritual gifts, they will continually see great unity of Spirit in their church meetings
- God gives us spiritual gifts to be a blessing to others, especially within the Body of Christ



The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” **(Ephesians 4:11-13)**



- **We must always want what is best for the team**

9) Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit and CHOOSING to walk in the Spirit

- If we continually choose to walk in the Spirit we will help to bring peace and unity to our church meetings and homes. We must continually refuse to react in the flesh and to yield to our carnal tendencies

*Walk In
The Spirit...*

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)

- Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in the fruit of the Spirit and to consistently walk in the Spirit



The Apostle Paul wrote,

**“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,”
(Ephesians 5:18)**



but the fruit of the Spirit is
love, JOY, peace
patience, kindness, goodness
faithfulness, gentleness, and
self-control.
against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit also helps us to grow in humility and Christlike character. Humility is the opposite of pride, which invariably brings strife and divisions into our church meetings



- The early church was **characterized by unity** and a culture where all Christians also considered the needs of other believers as well. As a result the early church grew rapidly



We see this in the book of Acts

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” **(Acts 4:32-33)**

SO IN CONCLUSION:

- If we all this year would look at *applying* these nine keys to maintaining unity in our own lives, we would help to bring about great unity in our church fellowship meetings and in our homes
- In this way we would position ourselves to see God's commanded blessings upon our lives and church fellowship this year, as we work together as a team, supporting and encouraging one another to be all that God has planned for our lives this year



- As a team we can achieve much if we work together in unity



- One will put a thousand to flight but two ten thousand to flight



- As we look at maintaining unity this year we will also create a healthy church community in which people will be able to grow in their faith and receive the love and encouragement that we all need to become all that God has planned for their lives in 2018

- I will now finish with one important key for leaders to adopt to help them to keep the unity of the Spirit in their church fellowships
- As leaders we must be quick to deal with any divisive behaviour that has the potential to negatively affect our fellowships
- The Apostle Paul instructed us what to do when people cause divisions within our church.



The Apostle Paul wrote, “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)