

# Biblical Commands of Love and Unity

## TEXTS:

Psalm 133:1-3  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
John 13:34,35  
John 15:12-14,17

## INTRODUCTION

There are two very clear and very important commands in the New Testament:

1. Separation from unbelievers and disobedient believers in local church ministry.
2. Love for and unity with true believers who walk obediently to the clear commands of scripture.

## NOTE:

1. These two commands do not in any way contradict one another.
2. These two commands must be kept in balance.
  - There is a natural tension between them.
  - We breath out of two lungs at the same time — Balance is not compromise! It is our God-given responsibility.

## UNITY DEFINED

### **Biblical words and expressions describing *unity*.**

- *Love one another* (15+3)
- *The unity of the spirit* (1)
- *Peace* (4)
- *No divisions among you* (1)
- *One body* (5)
- *One soul* (2)
- *One mind — understanding* (5)
- *One spirit* (3)
- *One heart* (1)
- *One passion* (6)
- *One fold* (1)
- *Speak the same thing* (1)
- *One* (3)

**N.B.** Before oneness, separation is to take place.

- It is the separated ones — sanctified ones who are intended by the Lord Jesus to be one.

- BUT, this oneness is to be true of all who are sanctified in the truth.
- This prayer of Christ (John 17:6,8,14,17-19) requesting oneness for those who are truly His own assumes that there will be many things that divide these sanctified brethren which ought not to divide them.

NOTE: Sanctification takes place only in the sphere of truth. This is defined as the very utterances [ta. r`h,mata] and the message [to.n lo,gon sou] given specifically by Christ.

### **What scriptural unity is NOT!**

1. Scriptural unity is not uniformity. It is harmony (symphony = sum+phonos = many different kinds of instruments sounding together in harmony).
2. Scriptural unity is not a uniting of believer and unbeliever, or a uniting of obedient believers with disobedient believers.
3. Scriptural unity is not a uniting of different religions believing in different gospels — different ways to heaven.

## THE BASIS OF BIBLICAL UNITY

### **A common life in Jesus Christ.**

1. A common life and mission.
2. Genuine spiritual relationships.
  - Relationships based upon carnal considerations are to be a thing of the past. New relationships based on reconciliation (vs. 19) are now to prevail.
  - There are differing gifts, personalities, insights, approaches to ministry, and emphases all among God-fearing, Bible-believing, fundamentalist brethren — like the many facets on a gem.
  - The mutual need of fundamental brethren one for another is beyond anything most of us recognize!
    - Dr. Issues needs Dr. Soul winner — Dr. Soul winner needs Dr. Issues.
    - Dr. Expositor needs Dr. Evangelism — Dr. Evangelism needs Dr. Expositor.
    - Dr. Missions needs Dr. Local Church — Dr. Local Church needs Dr. Missions.
    - Dr. Administrator needs Dr. Orator — Dr. Orator needs Dr. Administrator.
    - Dr. Traditional needs Dr. New Ideas — Dr. New Ideas needs Dr. Traditional.
    - Dr. Theology needs Dr. Practical — Dr. Practical needs Dr. Theology.

## **The Christ defined in the Word of God.**

### **The Scriptures themselves.**

1. The Fundamental truths of scripture.
2. Not logical conclusions, traditions, spiritual hang-ups, methodology (outside the realm of biblical principles).

Many equate *Methodology* with *Theology* in fundamental importance. There is a decided distinction between *Theology* and *Methodology*. *Methodology* is not fundamental — essential — to our belief and practice in the same sense as *Theology*. The principles for *Methodology* arise out of *Theology*, but they are not one and the same.

### **The clear commands of Scripture.**

1. Scriptural unity cannot exist with those who ignore or disobey the clear commands of Scripture.
2. Unity with and love for genuinely obedient brethren is not an option. **IT IS A CLEAR COMMAND OF SCRIPTURE!!!**
3. We are to love the brethren because God loves them! Not because they meet our expectations or because we find them likable or attractive.

## VIOLATIONS OF BIBLICAL UNITY

**Not only is there a false kind of unity — there is also a false kind of separation!**

**Separation misunderstood and misapplied results in unnecessary fragmentation and division.**

**Factious, divisive words and deeds done in the name of separation are a direct violation of biblical unity. Those guilty of these words and deeds are to be dealt with according to the instructions of Titus 3:10,11.**

NOTE:

- A heretic is one who chooses another way — one who causes divisions or separations contrary to biblical teaching.
- God **hates** the spreading of strife and discord among brethren.

### **Judging others is forbidden.**

- Condemnation for personal reasons is forbidden.
- Judging of motives is forbidden.

### **Wrong reasons for separation:**

1. Personal disagreements.
2. Within the bounds of biblical principles — differing decisions on colleges, mission boards, etc..
3. Differing standards.
4. Turf wars.

5. Politics within the work of God.
6. Denominational distinctives. Being of another denominational persuasion does not in and of itself constitute one an apostate.

**There no place for bitterness in the battle.**

1. Separation is never to be practiced for personal reasons but for biblical reasons and based upon biblical principles.
2. Much that is done in the name of separation is just plain meanness.

**There must be repentance for violations of biblical love and unity!**

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF LOVE AND UNITY

**There must be a place for reaching out to and restoration of fallen brethren.**

**How true Christian love operates.**

**QUESTION?** If we are to behave in this spirit toward those who are sinners and enemies, in what spirit should we behave toward those who are our brothers in Christ?

**The teaching of Matthew 18:15-17**

- Matthew 18 is not a procedure to deal with public sins.
- Matters of ecclesiastical separation are not personal matters between two individuals within the context of a local church.
- Matters of ecclesiastical separation are not a matter of a personal, unreconciled condition between differing brethren. They are a matter of discipline and accountability to the clear commands of Scripture.
- In Matthew 18, no matter of church discipline is involved. Even if it were a matter of discipline, the first party has already put the matter before the public — before the church and the world. Ecclesiastical separation is not therefore a private matter of personal offence. Our response must appropriately be as public as the original statement or action. Otherwise, the church will be hurt.

**More basic axioms:**

- You can have discipline without love, but you cannot have love without discipline.
- You can have separation without love, but you cannot have love without separation.
- You can have unity without love, but you cannot have love without unity.
- You can have doctrinal correctness without love, but you cannot have love without doctrinal correctness.
- You can have truth without love, but you cannot have love without the truth.

**Further clarifications:**

- It is wrong **not to separate** from *unbelievers* in matters of religious endeavor. **To unite** ecclesiastically with *unbelievers* is wrong!

- It is wrong **not to separate** *from believers* when clear basic principles of Scripture have been violated.
- It is wrong **to separate** *from obedient brethren*, as we would separate from unbelievers — on matters that clearly are not basic and fundamental to biblical belief and practice.

## KEEPING UNITY AND SEPARATION IN BALANCE

1. It is very important to keep a *cutting edge* on your ministry. If you do not, you will ultimately surround yourself with people who do not necessarily share your convictions, but who enjoy the *success* of what you are doing. In so doing, you will build an organization that will ultimately repudiate your convictions.

2. Failure to separate where the Scriptures require us to do so will result in serious offenses against God and His Word! The following important issues are at stake:

- **Identity** — assuming an identity in common with those who dishonor God — lending the good auspices of your name to that which dishonors God.
- **Morality** — abandoning biblical moral and social principles.
- **Commonality** — leaving biblical teachings and principles in order to establish common ground with others.
- **Credibility** — giving credibility to that which ought to be rejected — giving your personal approval to disobedience. **It is always wrong to add numbers, credibility, or strength to an apostasy!**
- **Culpability** — failure to reject wrong doctrine, conduct, morals and practices. Culpable = meriting condemnation or blame especially as wrong or harmful, blameworthy.