

# Missional Unity

by Gaylord Enns

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*Missional unity is the unity of believers with a shared mission to serve and share the gospel with others, reflecting God's nature and demonstrating the love of God to the world.*

**Duration:** 30:08

**Scripture:** John 13:34

**Topics:** "Unity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of unity among believers. He urges the audience to make every effort to preserve and guard the unity of the Spirit that God has given them. The speaker highlights the need for humility, gentleness, patience, and love in order to maintain this unity. He also reminds the audience of the new commandment given by Jesus to love one another. The speaker concludes by sharing his experience of being supported by a group of Methodist men who prayed for him, and he invites the audience to join him in prayer for his upcoming endeavors.

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## Transcript

It is really a delight to be with you. It's just a joy to spend some time with you here and again be able to share with the Aldersgate family. What a gift.

You're a blessing and I really appreciate just being able to be here again. I'm honored today to have my dad with me as well as my wife, Patty. But I'd like you to greet my dad.

He's right over here sitting in the back. Dad has his 100th birthday this month. And we're spending a little bit of extra time with one another because mom's been in the hospital.

And so sometimes I stay at dad's house and sometimes one of my sisters comes up. And then last night he came over and spent with us. And so we're taking advantage of this time.

And it really has been a lot of grace. And I count it an honor to be able to have my dad here and to honor him. It's always good to have my wife, Patty, here.

Stand up, babe, and welcome her. She doesn't always get to travel with me. So it's great to be together.

I've got to tell you just a little bit of a story here. I want to get you just briefly up to date and tell you a couple things that are happening. During the summer, I spoke at a men's retreat for Northern California

Methodist men.

And we were up in the Mount Shasta area. And I really enjoyed that time. And numbers of you guys were there.

And I see your faces in both services. And it's really good to be with you again. Now, during that time, I told you I'm going to be going in a couple of months down to Southern California to speak at a Calvary Chapel men's retreat.

And I said, how many of you would be willing to be on a prayer team to help pray for that event, which is ultimately going to take place in November? So I had you guys sign up. And there was a group of you signed up and formed a prayer team for me. And I just want to tell you, we had an awesome time.

There were, I think, 80 guys. They're from a large church in Southern California. There were 80 guys there.

And I'd never met them before. But they were so gracious. I felt so at home.

And the message really impacted them. So here's what I want to tell you, though. At the end of our time, when the retreat was drawing to a close on a Sunday morning, I said, I've got to tell you something.

I was speaking at a men's retreat for Methodist men in Northern California. And I told them about this retreat coming up. And I said, how many of you would pray for this coming retreat? So these guys had really enjoyed the time.

And so I said, you know what? I just have to tell you that this group of United Methodist men were praying for you during this retreat. Well, you could see these Calvary Chapel guys, their eyes just kind of got a little bit big. And then they focused back down again.

And I said, you know what I would like to do? Is I would like to ask if you would join in praying with me for the next things that are coming up for me. And so I said, I'm going to pass this notepad around. And if you would just sign up, I'll put you on an e-mail list.

I won't pester you, but I will give you periodic requests to pray with me about. So what I have to tell you is, well, I'm chasing my pen here. Fifty-five of them signed up.

And so, see, what I'm doing is setting you up this morning. If you would like to be, I believe in prayer. I believe I need an army of prayers.

I have a huge vision. I need an army of prayers to be praying for us. A week ago, I was with pastors in Grants Pass.

Almost 70 pastors were there. And I just felt so blessed to have your prayers and the support of people. This last week, it was a prayer summit with regional pastors, about 55 pastors.

I just participated in that at the Springs of Living Water. It was one of the best pastors' prayer summits we've had. This last couple of days, it was with the CTS, Center for Transformation Studies, as they did teaching on relational theology.

It's just two weeks from now, a week and a half from now, it will be Chico Pastors again. I need your prayers. So what I'm going to ask is if someone could just help me.

Here, I recognize it here. Could you just put that over on the table there? And if you would like to be part of that, when the service is over, would you sign up for that? So anyway, some exciting things are happening. And I do want to, I have a message that's kind of burning on my heart.

And I think it's very specifically for us in this city. And I know it's for believers everywhere. It's for this congregation.

Because wherever we are, I believe God wants to be with us and just honor us as we honor him. I want to speak today on the theme of missional unity. Missional unity.

What that means is simply this. It's unity with a mission. It's not just unity for the sake of unity.

It's unity because there's something very strategic that God is up to. And I want to talk about why unity is important and how we can have that unity, both in our congregations and in the cities that we are in. I'd like to have you open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10, verses 16 and 17.

1 Corinthians 10, verses 16 and 17. A very important passage of Scripture here for us. As the apostle Paul writes this letter, he says these words.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one loaf. Now there's a lot of words in there that would be interesting to follow. The word blessing, from which we get the word eulogy.

The word communion, which is known as koinonia. The word for Christ, the word for bread, for many. But I'll tell you the word that's gripped me.

It's the word one. One. In the Greek language it is heis.

Heis. It means the primary numeral. It's one in the Greek language and it means one for us.

This word has gripped my attention in Scripture for some specific reasons. Because it represents for us not only a word but a theme that has to do with the very nature of who God is. God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Who are one. Who are heis. And this has profound implications for us.

Part of the reason is God from the very beginning in Genesis chapter 1 began to reveal himself as the God who was both one but who was one in relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is a profound mystery but one that you'll see has very practical implications for us. The Scripture says there, Then God said, Let us make man in our image.

In our likeness. Out of this we begin to understand that the triune nature of God, the Trinity, is really hidden in these words. Let us.

In our image. In our likeness. We begin to see that God is showing us that though he is the one God, he is embodied in relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yesterday, Friday night, yesterday, and then yesterday evening, Patty and I had dinner with Dr. Paul Metzger. He's a professor at Multnomah Biblical Seminary in Portland. And his specialty is the relational nature of the Trinity.

And he, that's his specialty. And it was so fun to sit down with him and listen to him begin to speak about this. Because he made this point.

He said because God is relational, the one God is relational, existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And because we are made in his image and in his likeness, we are by creation relational. Now he said if God had been singular rather than triune in his being, and we were created in that image, we could not possibly be relational.

So there's some profound implications. We are called to be a relational people because our God is relational at the very core of who he is. And therefore, this God who exists in perfect unity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one has called us to be one as we will see in some profound ways in the prayer that Jesus reveals to us.

Jesus was asked by an expert in the law, the law of Moses. He came to Jesus and he said, tell us, what is the greatest commandment in the law, the law of Moses? Jesus answered with these words. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

He is one. He emphasized the unity, and then, of course, he went on to talk about the two-part formulation that we know, that we're to love the Lord, and that was Israel's core commandments. Without understanding the significance of this Greek word, heis, or one, we miss a strategic part of God's plan in disclosing himself to us as believers and showing his nature to others around us.

It is very important that we understand why this one God has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, to look at this more clearly, I want us to go to the prayer, the final prayer that we see which follows the discourse and is before his garden prayer. I shouldn't say the final prayer, but the final prayer that his disciples are able to record clearly for us.

It was recorded in John's Gospel, and we see that in the 17th chapter of John, he gives us insight into the prayer that Jesus prays in those final moments before his suffering. He prays to the Father in this way. Father, the time has come.

Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. Now, he prayed this because he knew that he was going to be leaving them. He was leaving the world, and he prays specifically for the 11 disciples who have remained faithful to him.

He prays for them very specifically, and here is how he prays. He says, Father, I will remain in the world no longer, but they, these 11 disciples, they will still be in the world, and I am coming to you, Father. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

Very interesting language. He now begins to tell us, his heart, that they may be one as we are one. Amazingly, he doesn't stop with praying for the 11.

He actually prays for those of us that are gathered here as believers in this room. He continues his prayer in verse number 20 of John 17, and he says this, My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who

will attend Aldersgate Methodist... Oh, no, wait a second.

Okay. Those who will believe in me through their message. That's us.

That's believers across this city. That's believers throughout our state. That's believers on the west coast and in the central states, north and south and on the east coast.

It's Christians around the world. I pray for not these 11 alone, but I pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one. Father, just as you're in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity or oneness to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me.

Now, do you begin to understand why I call this missional unity? I call it this because in God's plan, the cosmos, the world, as we would call it in the Greek cosmos, it means the order of things, the people that just live around us, who do not yet see the coming kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They do not know that kingdom. All they know is the kingdoms of this world, the governments they live with, the strategies of common governorship.

That's all they know. God gives us this plan so that those around us can look at those of us that have embraced the good news of the kingdom of God, the saving grace and lordship of Jesus Christ, and they can see in us a heavenly unity. Something that does not have its origins where we live down here now.

That they can see that unity that exists among us, a quality that enables them to know and believe two things. Number one, that Jesus was indeed sent from God the Father. And number two, that we are loved by the Father even as he loved his son Jesus.

Is that astonishing? Is that amazing? Do you find that amazing? I do. I think it's wonderful and it's like it stretches us and says, you mean you want to love us like that and you want to demonstrate your love for us to people around us? Through this amazing gift of unity which you've given to your church? For that reason, I can't take it lightly. Again, may they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you love me.

The words of Jesus. We started with this, Paul's words in the Corinthian letter. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body for we are all partakers of that one loaf.

This amazing participation in the body and the blood of Christ has called us into one. Into, as the NIV would say, participation. The New American Standard would call it sharing.

The King James calls it communion. Young's literal translation calls it fellowship. It's the Greek word *koinonia*.

It means this intimate participation with us and God and us and one another. He then goes on to say in the Corinthian letter. For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of that body, though there are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, or whether we were, and we were all made to drink of one spirit. And then he goes on to talk about the nature of the body. And he says, you know, if the body was just an eye, where would the hearing be? If the body was just a hand, where would the foot be? And he begins to talk about the importance and how God has placed all the members together, and they're all needed.

They all need to be their best self in God to make the picture complete. It takes all of us. In fact, he goes on to say, the weaker members are actually necessary.

Did I get that right? The weaker are necessary. And in fact, he says, the members that we deem to be less honorable, on those we bestow more abundant honor. Less presentable, we give them a little special attention, make them more presentable.

Whereas some parts that don't lack any honor, we don't give them special. You know, it's like pretty amazing how God has designed the body, but he says, I've done this so there would be no divisions in the body, but that all the members would have the same care for one another. Now, you are the body of Christ and members of it individually.

That truth is relevant for this congregation. Every member is important. Every believer has a strategic place.

It's also true for the congregations that meet up and down the street who have put their faith and trust in our Lord and Savior and believe the gospel of his kingdom. It's true for them as well. We need each other.

And in fact, God is counting on the fact, and that's why Jesus prayed it, that there will come a time when our unity is displayed, not that we meet in the same building, but the quality of our love for one another is such that the world can look and say, you know what? This is not just religion. The God who created this incredible expanse and us in it is the God who has sent his Son to show us how much he loves us. And he wants to reveal that love to us through his Son, Jesus.

This is extremely important. Practically, how does this oneness happen? Well, first of all, I want to say it happens because God is one, even though he is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He exists in perfect relationship.

That's how this unity happens. But number two, because of that, God has designed us to be relational and us to be united through the miracle of our love for one another and the gift of his Spirit. Oneness comes from him.

Again, in Ephesians, Paul says this, there is one body, one spirit, just as you're called in, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism in Ephesians 4, one God and Father who is of all, who is over all and through all and in all. And then he exhorts us to do our part. God has created us by his Spirit in one body.

But then he says, in Ephesians 4, 3, Be diligent, that is, make every effort to preserve or to guard the unity of the Spirit. In other words, what he has given us, he asks us to guard it and maintain it. Make every effort to guard and maintain that unity of the Spirit.

It does not happen through sloppy living. It doesn't happen through carelessness. As a matter of fact, in the first verse of chapter 4, he has said these words, I implore you, walk in a manner worthy of the calling

which you've been given with all humility, with gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.

It requires that for us to maintain the precious gift of unity which he has given. We need to remember that the new covenant that we will once again celebrate this morning, the new covenant in his shed blood, in his broken body, that new covenant came with a new commandment. Given the same night in which he introduced the new covenant, Jesus said a new commandment I give you, love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. And by this all men will know that you're my disciples if you love one another. I believe we're being given a wonderful opportunity in the city of Chico and I've shared this with our pastors, I'll be underlining it again in a week and a half when we're together.

And just saying I believe we are being given the privilege of pioneering for one place on the earth, a city where pastors are willing to love each other as Jesus commanded us. And to lead congregations that love one another as Jesus commanded us. And for the world to get a look at the amazing gift of what God has done in his people.

And that they can know and believe that Jesus was indeed son of the Father. And that there is an amazing God, one God, who has revealed himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Who dwells in perfect, loving, humble unity.

Amazing, amazing gift. You know this new covenant is founded on two things as I close this morning. Two things.

It's founded on a deep, deep trust in Jesus Christ. That's the first core component. Scripture says, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Faith in Jesus is the first core commandment for the Christian faith. Put our trust in him. The second core commandment is the one we just mentioned.

The new commandment. Love one another. Jesus says, As I have loved you.

This is the new commandment. The one he owned is my commandment. This is my commandment.

Love one another. Today, I want us to go to prayer as we come to the end of this time and prepare to remember our Lord Jesus. His broken body has shed blood for us.

I want us just to bow our heads in a moment of prayer. And I want to ask you this question. Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ? Are you trusting him as Savior and Lord? The one who came from a place we've never seen, from the heavenlies, to proclaim to us an eternal kingdom and show us the heart of our Father who loves us deeply and who wants to come in to us and fill us with his Holy Spirit, bringing life and grace and forgiveness to all who trust.

Have you taken that step? If you've never taken that step, today is the day. Don't put it off any longer. Just simply say, Oh Lord Jesus, I see you on that cross paying the price for my sin and reconciling me to God and to others through the cross and through your sacrifice there.

Begin to release your faith and trust in him. He is an awesome Savior and wants to be the Lord of our lives, the giver of not only a great gift of forgiveness but of eternal life. The second thing is when we

prepare to receive this bread and this cup, we should always think about the commandment that Jesus gave us.

How am I doing in my relationship? Scripture says, Examine yourself. How am I doing in loving as Jesus commanded? So I'm asking that those two points today as we pray, you begin to let God just touch your heart, receive the grace, whatever you need to receive in this moment. Father, I thank you for your word.

I thank you that you have called us to an extraordinary calling of beginning to demonstrate Heaven's wisdom on planet Earth. I thank you Lord that this reality is to become clear to those who see us. Our obedience to you, our love for one another, and ultimately it's your love for us that makes it possible.

Today Lord, we just open our hearts to receive and put our trust even more deeply in you today. We come to you. Be Savior and Lord.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit. Fill us to overflowing so that the love that fills us flows out of us like a river to our brothers and sisters and to those who don't yet know what this family is like experientially. Thank you for hearing our prayer and answering today in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And everyone said, Amen. Blessings.

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