

Maintaining Unity in Your Church by Mack Tomlison

by Mack Tomlinson

Maintaining true, loving unity in the church is essential for the church's spiritual health and is a command from God.

Duration: 49:02

Scripture: Philippians 2:1

Topics: "Church Unity", "Christian Love"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the critical importance of maintaining unity and love within the church body, highlighting the dangers of division, gossip, and selfish ambition. The speaker urges every church member to proactively preserve unity, avoid divisive behaviors, and prioritize the welfare of the entire church over personal preferences or disagreements. The message underscores the biblical command to maintain a spirit of humility, forgiveness, and love, following the example of Christ's mindset and sacrificial love for the church.

Transcript

We'll read the first five verses. Philippians 2 Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. You know, I've found in my own life and my own ministry, increasingly in recent years, a growing desire, a growing burden and concern.

And that is for the encouragement and strengthening of pastors and churches. For the spiritual health of churches. Because true churches, Gospel churches, are always under attack.

And they always will be under attack. This concern, this strong feeling that seems to always have moves me and it burdens me and it motivates me consistently. If a church or a pastor that I know and love is hurting, my heart is with them and for them.

I think about them. I pray for them. Paul the Apostle said it this way, besides all that comes on me daily, my deep concern for all the churches.

The message tonight has to do with that. The spiritual care and welfare of every church represented here. I have preached this message in the last two or three years in at least two churches that I know that after I preached it, they went through the issue that I preached on.

It has to do with the importance of preserving unity in your own church. Preserving spiritual unity and love in your church. Now, if I were to ask you, and I want you to answer the question in your mind, if I were to ask you to name two or three of the most important things a church must have, what would you say? Good doctrine? True pastors? A sound Gospel? Doing true evangelism? How would you answer the question, what two or three most important things must a church have to survive? Without which, if you don't have this or these things, the church won't survive.

How many of you, in answering that question, included true loving unity among the members of the church? The New Testament seems to place this right at the top. In almost all of his epistles, Paul was calling the churches to maintain unity. To not have division.

To not have fighting and division and quarreling among them. And I'm convinced that maintaining true Gospel, spiritual, loving unity in a church may be the single most important thing, because if you don't have that, it doesn't matter how good your preacher is. It doesn't matter how good your doctrine is.

It doesn't matter how good your outreach is. If you don't have unity among the brethren that's maintained and guarded, then the enemy has a foothold in your midst. No one emphasized this more than Paul.

And I wonder if we view this as urgently and as important as Paul did when he visited. Acts 15.41 says he returned again strengthening the churches. He always had this on his mind.

He was always on the lookout for trouble within the church. So I want you this evening to think about your church. Your pastor, your pastors and elders.

Think about your church. And think about the brethren that make up your church. Have them in your mind.

And your place in your church. And think of this, three months from now, an argument, a disagreement, a criticism of an elder by one of the members begins, and suddenly, there's a growing, creeping, like a fog, like a mist, a gentle mist. There's a growing, spreading sense of division begins to brew.

Social media within the church begins to spread questions, concerns, doubts. And those causing it, they're not going to their elders about the concerns. They wouldn't do that.

No, they seek out the weak-minded. They seek out those they can influence. And suddenly, suddenly before the church knows it, suddenly before the eldership realizes what's going on, people in the church are confused and hurting.

And they don't even know how to view things and they do not know what to do. Such are the seeds of church division. And when that happens three months from now, may God help it not to be so, but when it happens in your midst as a member of your church, what are you going to do? You love your elders.

You love your pastors. You feel devoted to the members. You have a loyalty to those you love.

And suddenly, there's this difference. There's this division. There's this problem relationally.

And you're caught in the middle as a member of the flock, as a member of the body. What are you going to do when it creeps up? How do you handle it? Do you listen to the reports and the accusations? Because people you know and love and have respected, they're talking and they talk to you. Out of concern.

Out of sympathy. They begin to talk to you. It begins to circulate among the church.

Do you know what to do when a division arises in your church? This is all important. This is critically important. You know why? Because if you respond rightly, you will honor Christ.

But if you respond wrongly, you will sin against Christ and His church. How you handle a division that rises up is all important. Not for the sides that you choose, but for the glory of Christ and for the welfare of your church.

Those churches in the New Testament that Paul planted and visited, they were all dear to Paul. He said like his own children. And one of the most important and urgent things to Paul in all those churches was their present, maintained unity and love one for another.

And no church more than the Philippians. Now, Paul speaks often of the loving unity of churches. He said to the Corinthians, for instance, let all you do be done in love.

Let nothing be done with divisions among you. Let no divisions be among you. To the Ephesians, he said, endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

And here among the Philippians, almost as dear as church. It was a doctrinally sound church. It was a giving church.

It was a morally pure church. It was a missional church. Yet, Paul has a real concern for them.

What is his concern for them? Their church unity was potentially fragile and in danger. Where's the evidence of that? Well, in two chapters in the Epistle, in chapter 2, he gives this exhortation about unity. And in chapter 4, he gives an example of disunity among them.

Turn to chapter 4, verses 2 and 3, and you see this. Chapter 4, verses 2 and 3. He says, I implore you, Odiath, and I implore Sympathy, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Here's a case of disunity in the Philippian church between two women.

And Paul makes it a church issue. Did he have a right to do that? Yes. Do pastors or elders have a right to go to two people who are arguing, not getting along? Do they have a right biblically to go to them and exhort them to make this right? They do.

You know why? Because it's a relational problem that could fester and affect the whole church. He's exhorting them about this. These two women had a relational problem that had caused a division among them.

Perhaps a jealousy. Perhaps hurt feelings. Unforgiveness.

Something had offended one or both of them. And it damaged their mutual unity. And a broken relationship was there.

And Paul, as I said, makes it a church issue because a little leaven will leaven the whole lot. You've seen it. One family, one person gets disgruntled.

Gets a burr under their saddle, as we would say in Texas. And they've got an issue that they won't let go of. See, disunity is not an issue of having a difference of opinion.

It's all an issue of the attitude and the heart. And these women had this broken relationship and Paul makes it a church issue because it can endanger the entire church. So he addresses it in the letter to the church.

The second evidence is back in chapter 2 where we read Paul's strong admonition to the church in verses 1-5 about maintaining unity. So, let's look at this beginning in verse 2. He calls them here to see the importance of unity in their church. He says in verse 2, Fulfill or complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

This is a clear call and a biblical command to unity within the body. All of you, Paul says, all of you Philippians are to genuinely have love for one another the same kind you had from the beginning when God made you a church in Philippi. You are to be in one accord.

You're to be knit together by the Holy Spirit in love and let nothing separate you. You are to have oneness in like-minded attitudes. Be in harmony and in unity.

Paul says, give me this joy. Here he is in prison. He says, you can make my joy complete by doing this.

Same idea as in Ephesians 4 verse 3. Be eager, Paul said, to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace. So, Paul says, you Philippians, if you're going to fulfill my joy, if you're going to be a church pleasing to Christ and that honors the Savior, you must do this. Division in a church, unless it's division over the Gospel, I'm not talking about churches that are compromising the Gospel or the truth.

And believers in those churches see that compromise and they don't go along with it and sometime they're called divisive. I'm not talking about that. They're not divisive.

I'm talking about in churches that are seeking to be biblical, those who become carnally divisive, that kind of division is always demonic. Always. It's quite a thing when you think about this.

And Paul says to them, you Philippians, every one of you must, you must maintain, it's on you as a member of the body to maintain as much as it depends on you, live at peace with all men. You must maintain and preserve true, loving unity. Why? Well, because God commands it.

And because the Lord Jesus Christ died for His bride and He wants His children getting along. You know, whenever any of our children have ever had arguments, relational problems, you know how my wife and I feel? Grieved. Sad.

How does the Lord Jesus Christ feel when the members of His bride and His body don't get along? Satan hates unity in a church. He loves discord. He loves division.

Because loving unity is the glue that keeps a church together. And there is nothing more dear, more near to the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, than a church having and preserving unity. Why is this essential? Well, two or three things, a way of introduction come to my mind.

First of all, it is the heart and attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says in v. 5, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. What mind? It's not v. 6 and following.

That's not the mind we're to have. Christ is just the great example that exemplified this. It's the mind that was in Christ that we're to have in v. 1-4.

This is the heart and attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ because it glorifies God to have a heart of unity. Because division of believers is a sin against Christ Himself and against His church. And because corporate unity in a church gives credibility to your corporate church witness.

Who wants to come to a church that's bickering and arguing and not loving one another? Who wants to bring a new convert in such an atmosphere? No one. How can God bless a ministry, a church, a true Gospel witness, and let it be authentic if you don't have unity? Now remember, the great reality of this, is there's one thing that's essential. You can have spiritual unity with a brother or sister you don't agree with doctrinally because you're both Christians.

The one essential thing to spiritual unity is the true Gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ and being a true Christian. And there is no excuse for division among true Christians. It is always sin.

And within a church like the Philippians, those two women were going to be in sin that would potentially harm the whole church if they did not obey Paul's admonition, which is our scriptural admonition, to make sure you maintain this unity. And let your differences melt where you love one another in spite of those differences. Now, Paul says in verses 1 and 2, look at that.

Why does he say what he says in verse 1? If there is any consolation in Christ, if there's any comfort of love, if there's any fellowship of the Spirit, if there's any affection and mercy, what's he saying? He's saying if any of you are true Christians at all, he's calling about the validity of true Christian experience. And he's saying if you know the reality of consolation in Christ, if you know the love of God and the love of Christ, if you know true fellowship and communion with the Holy Spirit, and if you know what real heart affection and mercy is, if you've experienced this, if you're true believers, then, here's what you need to do. Fulfill my joy by loving one another and being one.

Psalms 133 says, where brethren dwell together in unity, true spiritual unity that's good and pleasant, is like Aaron's oil that anoints everything and it's like the dew that comes down on Mount Hermon that refreshes saints in their communion. And David said it's there where brethren dwell together in unity, it's there that God will command the blessing. Where brothers are dwelling together in unity.

God will command life even forevermore. No attack of the enemy can defeat a church that above all maintains true, loving unity. Paul's last word to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13-14, he prays this for them.

May the love of God, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. This is a prayer for them to experience that more and more. The presence and the working of the Holy Spirit is ours as a believer.

And is ours corporately in all of our churches. We know the Holy Spirit of God experientially. We experience Him.

We love Him and we welcome all that He wants to do. And we certainly should have that heart. But you go back to verse 1. Paul says, if you have experienced this true salvation, the encouragement of being in Christ, the comforts of the love of God, the love of the brethren, true fellowship of the Holy Spirit, if you have true affection in your heart and you've partaken of mercy and you're a mercy shower, if you know this, then do something for me here in prison.

Make my joy complete to know that you are having true unity. He said you must preserve and maintain. If God is our Father and He does this toward His children, how can we not? I'm talking about nitpicking.

Being divisive. Being a critic of every little thing that comes along because that's not what you would choose. That's not what you would prefer.

And it's just this critical spirit. Or those who easily get offended, take up an offense and they just hold on to it. They won't let it go.

And it festers in their mind and in their heart. And it alienates them from their pastors. And their heart drifts away from the church.

They still come. They're there outwardly for a while at least. It won't be long until they're gone.

Or, it won't be long before they'll create a stink and a mess in the church. Because in their heart is a stink and a mess of a critical spirit. Let me ask you this question.

Your church right now. Your relationship with those in your church. Is your relationship right and well with everyone in your church? Everyone.

Make sure. Because you can't worship God or walk with God or please Him if you're not right with His other children. If you're living in broken relationship in your own church, what do you do on Sunday? Just avoid those people? Is Christ avoiding you? A judging critical spirit.

Unforgiveness. Bitterness. This creeps into the hearts of believers at times.

Just like it did these two women. And they were admonished, make it right. Don't put it off.

Admonish them to be of one mind in the Lord. And you know what? When a Christian does that, when you have a problem with someone and you go to them in love, humbly, and you make sure things are right, you are maintaining unity in the body as a vital, vital member. What are hindrances to unity? Look at v. 3. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit.

Selfish ambition or conceit. The idea is rivalry, arrogance, pride, power seekers, controlling people, legalists, fault finders. Proverbs 6 says there are six things the Lord hates.

Well, even seven are an abomination to the Lord. And the seventh one is what? One who sows discord among the brethren. Gossips, slanderers, sowers of discord, know-it-alls.

Those people who are easily offended. They've been coming for three months. Well, people aren't treating me right.

I'm not coming back. Well, they didn't speak to me. So they don't want to come back.

Well, those elders, they're warm toward others, but they're never warm toward me. Whatever it is that gets into the heart of people and they take offense, and a spirit of strife and division grows, and it begins to affect the church. Whatever it is that brings strife and division, every Christian must avoid it.

Recognize it. Discern it. Mark it.

You still love the people, but you discern it for what it is. You recognize it and you avoid it, Paul says. The apostolic exhortation.

Listen to this. 1 Corinthians 1. I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same Spirit. Chapter 3, 1 Corinthians.

For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not acting out of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? Jude makes it even stronger. Have you read Jude lately? Verses 16 and 17. Listen to this.

Talking about people who cause division. These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires, loudmouth boasters. It is these who cause division, worldly people who have not the Holy Spirit.

Never, never, ever enter into gossip and slander and criticism and opposition of your elders, your pastors, or your church. Don't ever do it. And don't let anybody draw you into such a conversation.

Because they're baiting you, they're drawing you, the enemy is using them to draw you in to make you a malcontent, a gossip, a slanderer. Number 16 is quite striking. Korah and three of the men, and 250 men, Korah drew into the rebellion.

They opposed Moses and Aaron. Korah and his men said, you know, Moses, you really think you're too important. Everybody's as holy as you are.

You're exalting yourself above others. When Moses heard it, what did he do? Fell on his face. And then Moses said to all the people, if these men die naturally, you'll know God did not send me.

But if God does a new thing and the earth opens up its mouth and swallows them up alive, you'll know these men have rejected the Lord. And when he finished speaking, the Bible says the ground opened up and swallowed them up with all their families. And fire came forth from God's presence and consumed the 250 men.

God sent Korah and his whole house to hell straight from the split ground. As Conrad Murrell said one time, God sent them to hell with their britches on. Why? All because of opposing God's appointed leadership.

Was Moses perfect? No. Was Aaron perfect? Obviously not. But that's not the point.

God's leaders are appointed to feed the sheep and build the church and equip the saints. And when they're opposed, or the church is opposed, the opposers are attacking the very bride and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever you do, some of you may be new Christians here.

Some of you may have never been in a church that you loved and it's hard for you to be in the church you're in. But whatever you do, don't become a church critic and don't develop a critical spirit where you're always finding fault in the name of holiness, in the name of righteousness. A divisive person is always an

enemy of the greater good and the unity of the church.

A divisive person can be a gifted and knowledgeable person. They can be a respected person. They can even be in a leadership position.

They can be an outwardly moral person. But the Bible says they seek their own interests and not that which is Jesus Christ. Not that which is edifying to the church.

This is always a potential danger in any church. Beloved, your church may have never been through such a thing. But I want to tell you something.

A division, a problem like this, is right around the corner. One argument away. One disagreement away.

One act of church discipline away. And the enemy will create situations just to see if he can bring division among the brethren. What promotes unity? Verses 4 and 5. Let each of you look out not for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. What promotes unity? Humility. Christ had this mind in Himself.

Loneliness of mind. Loneliness of heart. A servant's heart.

Not being always opinionated. Not thinking we always are right or that we always know what's right. Not being a high-minded, opinionated person that has to push our agenda on others.

A servant's heart. A forgiving heart. Motivated by the love of Christ.

The love of the brethren. The love of the Gospel. And mainly motivated in your church by the welfare of the whole church.

That's a faithful church member. That's the best member of the body of Christ that God can have. Is one who's motivated for the welfare of their church.

Not to get their own way, but to promote the interest of Jesus Christ. Paul says, do everything within you to preserve and maintain loving unity. The enemy hates it and the Lord loves it.

Now these realities of unity that he mentions in verse 2. Four things that make up unity in verse 2. Being like-minded. What does this mean? It doesn't mean you agree on everything. There's always differences of opinion.

There always are. It means to think in a certain way with a certain loving, mature attitude so as to preserve the relationship. Is it better if you disagree and you're having an argument? To win the argument? Or maintain a right spirit? And be the loving one in the end? This idea of being like-minded is a moral attitude where we're reconcilatory and we don't have a divisive spirit.

Having the same love, he says. This is what I want of you. Having the same love.

This means, you Philippians, the love that you've had for one another in the history of your church, when God began to save the jailer and Lydia and others and a church was birthed and there was real love there and great joy there. This love, maintain it. The love you've had from the beginning.

This is what you're to walk in and still have. Having the same love one for another. Being in one accord.

Living in a harmonious relationship. Your own brethren in your church. Is there disharmony between you and them? Or is there harmony? Being of one mind.

It is not differing viewpoints that cause disunity, but rather a wrong attitude toward others whose views differ from ours. Let me say that again. It is not differing viewpoints that cause disunity, but rather a wrong attitude toward others whose views differ from ours.

Do you have less love for those who disagree with you? And more love toward those who always agree with everything you think is right? How can division be avoided? What is every Christian in a church to do? Here's your homework when you go home. It's fun to be at a conference How about walking it out when you're home? A month from now, two months from now, a year from now. Here's homework for you in your church.

What's every Christian to do in a church to avoid disunity? And when it comes, how do you walk? Number one, always, always maintain a right heart and a right attitude. That's the critical thing. If you don't have that, you're going to miss the mark every time.

It's not being right. It's being right in your heart toward others. Always maintain a right spirit and attitude because potential division will come.

Disagreements are going to come. And the critical thing then is how's your heart and your attitude and your love toward that person who is causing a stink in your midst? Secondly, something to avoid. Never listen to or repeat slander, gossip, or a bad report in a church about a brother or sister in the church.

Never. When it starts, stop them. When it starts, stop them.

You have the right to stop them. You have biblical authority to say, Brother, stop. Sister, stop.

Have you talked to that other person about this? Have you talked to that elder about this? And generally, what are they going to say? No. Well, you've ended the slander. You've ended the gossip.

You've clipped the grapevine where it can't continue. Never, ever, ever enter into a critical conversation with anybody outside the church or in the church about one of your leaders or about anybody in the church. Never allow it to enter your ears.

Next, don't let anything come between you and a brother or sister or hinder your love for one another. You and I should have a personal goal to be the most loving, supportive, humble, faithful member of the church. Is that your goal? Is that your heart's desire? Be the most loving, humble, faithful member of the body.

That's how you maintain spiritual unity. Next thing to do, watch for division and proactively kill it. This doesn't happen often.

Years ago, when our church only had two elders, Philip Neely and I, some families came to our church and they had an agenda. Doctrinally, they agreed with our church, but they had an agenda. From the first Sunday, they were pushing it.

How much do you all do for the family? Well, how much family integration took you? How much this? How much that? And the meal times, they were talking about it. With new Christians, it didn't have a clue what they were talking about. So what were we to do? We immediately scheduled breakfast with the main leader.

Immediately. We didn't wait three months, six months. We saw division coming and seeds of discord and confusion could be sown.

We met with him. We said, listen, we welcome you to come, but this isn't where our church is and we're not going there. Our church is not about focusing on the family.

Our church is about the whole counsel of God and the Gospel and the glory of Christ. And so, we're not going there. You can't discuss this anymore at our meetings.

They never came back. And we were saved probably months of headache and counseling and everything else. Proactively stop division when it starts or you will have a headache that will grow and grow and grow.

The entire church, the elders, the deacons, and every church member, as one corporate man, one unified band like Nehemiah and his whole band of brothers, you don't put up with division with a divisive person at all. Once it's clear that that's what people are doing, then those people must be stopped. Discipline such a person and avoid them.

Because what's more important? Their feelings or the whole church being preserved? Romans 16 and 17, Paul says this, I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause division and avoid them. That's pretty clear, isn't it? Watch out for those who cause division and avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own desires.

Anybody who's a divisive person, Paul says you can't have fellowship with them, you're not to have fellowship with them, because they are serving their own desires and not Christ. I want you to turn to Titus 3 verses 9 and 10. Titus 3 verses 9 and 10.

It's quite striking what Paul says here to Titus. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and striving about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.

Now see, this can become confusing in a whole church because the whole body must view it this way. What happens is, when somebody that's likable or friendly, or you've grown warm toward them, they start causing problems, and then the elders or the leaders have to start dealing with those people in a serious way. If you don't view this right, you'll get confused.

You'll say, well, I don't really think they're being loving. Is that right for elders to do that? I'm not sure I agree with that. And the talk starts.

You see, every member of the church must view this rightly to preserve the unity of the body. And if every church member, every believer in a church viewed this the right way, the confusion and the discouragement and the lack of not knowing what to do would stop. Every Christian should know what to do when this stuff starts.

Always. You should know as much as any of the leadership because you've got to be clear on this. Because it'll affect you.

And it'll affect those you love. And it'll affect new Christians and weak Christians. And they're going to come to you because they'll have the courage to come to you when they won't have the courage to come to the elders, and they'll ask you, I don't know what to do.

I don't know how to view this. You've got to tell them. You've got to make them see the glory of Christ and the glory of the church and the unity of the body is the prevailing responsibility of all of us.

And that's more important than the feelings and opinions of a few people. So, Titus is told by Paul, reject the divisive man after the first and second admonition. Romans 15.5 says something similar.

You don't need to look at it, but just remember Romans 15.5. Paul says, Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another according to Christ Jesus. Paul is always connecting this like-mindedness to Christ Jesus. He did that in Philippians 2. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

Here he does it again. Be like-minded toward one another according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind, that is, one heart, unity, loving affection for one another, not letting differences divide you, with one heart and one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, if your church hasn't been tested on this yet, the day's coming when it will.

You've got to know where you stand. You've got to know how to view it. You have to have spiritual eyes and discernment to view this not naturally, not carnally, not on the human level, but biblically, theologically, spiritually, discerning.

You've got to be on the right side. And that's Christ's side. And the church's side when it's carnal divisiveness.

Protect the loving unity of the church at all costs. Not at the expense of the Gospel, but because, beloved, you as a member of the body and a member of the church, if you're not an elder or a pastor, you can't set the doctrine of the church. The elders do that under the authority of Scripture.

And you can't produce unity. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives unity. But, you as a Christian in your church can do all in your powers to view this rightly and to work diligently at preserving church unity as an essential and a precious thing.

Because the glory of Christ in your midst is at stake. And a pure, powerful testimony of your church is at stake toward those who know about your church. Make sure that you, as a Christian, preserve, protect, and maintain unity in your church.

Do you view this rightly? Can you go home this weekend going back and viewing your church as precious? As the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ being toward her? That He counts His bride? The part of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ that you're a part of, that He views it as precious. And above all things, your head of Christ, the head of your church, wants you to maintain love. Especially when there are differences.

It's easy to love others that you agree with. It's easy to love those you get along with. It's easy to love those when there's nothing relationally wrong.

But real love is tested when you don't agree. Real love is tested when someone's bitter in how you relate to them and they're attacking the church. Real love is tested when there are differences.

That's when you must endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Are you a divisive person? Or are you a unifying, peace-preserving, church-loving member of the body? We're going to sing another hymn. Savior, like a shepherd, lead us.

We need the Lord Jesus Christ to rule over our churches and to so preserve us that He'll let our churches persevere on in love and in unity. Because if we don't have that, the enemy will have a heyday to tear us apart. Let's pray before we sing.

Father, on these things of love and unity, Your Word is so clear. And yet, these things are so hard at times to walk in. So hard to preserve when they're tested in real relationships, when people are difficult and divisive and critical.

Lord, would You help us? Help each of our churches. Help us, Lord, as individuals to walk in such a way toward our own church that, Lord, we would walk in the Spirit and preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by letting love prevail in all things in our relationships. Lord, protect our churches from the enemy's attacks.

Protect us from division. Protect us, Lord, from the sheep getting hurt and scattered. Protect us from confusion.

And teach us how to view these things, Lord, biblically. And Lord, when we're tested, when any among us are tested on these very areas, help us, Lord, to not react emotionally, to not react in favoritism, to not react out of carnal loyalty to some relationship. But, Lord, to react in such a way that our response will be a right one that will please You and not a wrong one that would be a sinful choice.

Lord, bless this message to our hearts and to our churches. And help us to see and live out the importance of maintaining true unity. In Christ's name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/-Pw8v63l-dc.mp4>

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