

The Illusion of Unity by Eli Bernard

Unity - u·ni·ty [yoo-ni-tee]-*noun*

1. the state of being one; oneness.
2. a whole or totality as combining all its parts into one.
3. the state or fact of being united or combined into one, as of the parts of a whole; unification.
4. absence of diversity; unvaried or uniform character.
5. oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement.

Many churches also define unity as the absence of conflict. The thought is something like this: "Jesus said that they will know that we are Christians by our love, so we must never appear to have any conflict."

Or...

"We are one in the bond of love. So, we will not propose, support or encourage any activity or ministry that could break that bond."

Mike Slaughter, the pastor of the highly effective Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, has said, "We just decided that we would never vote "No" on something Jesus would do."

The amazing thing about unity, is that so often, churches choose to be in unity with everyone except Jesus. Take a close look at many of His interaction with followers and non-followers alike.

For example, we don't have to take too long a look at Judas to realize that he was never on the same page with the rest of the disciples.

In Matthew 16:23, Jesus calls Peter "Satan" and tells him that he is a stumbling block. (Sound like unity to you?)

In John 13:8, Peter strongly refuses to have his feet washed by Jesus. Jesus clearly states that the division will be permanent unless Peter allows Jesus to wash his feet. (Sense any conflict in the air?)

In John 2:15, it appears that Jesus is the only one that has a problem with the "unity" of behavior in the temple. He gets a whip and drives out all of the sacrificial animals and money changers, spilling their coins and furniture along the way. (Ahh, this sounds more like unity, doesn't it? Before you answer too quickly, don't forget it was THE CHURCH where Jesus was doing the driving out.)

In John 2:1-11, we find ourselves with Jesus' mother, asking him to "so something" to stop the wine whining at the wedding. Jesus clearly tells her it is not His time. She proceeds - in unity - to completely ignore His statements and expect His cooperation.

Herein lies the illusion of Unity.

If it looks like unity and sounds like unity, it must be unity. After all, no one is complaining and no one is out of step. Everyone is happy with the way things are going.

But, do we, like Slaughter, even pretend that Jesus is in the room? Do we find our unity around Him, His will and His way, or like His mother, simply ignore what He has to say and expect His cooperation.

Unity is hard, especially when an organization is in active pursuit of a goal. Absence of conflict is easy. Just make "absence of conflict" the goal.

Imagine that you and I decided to scale a mountain, you from the north face and I from the south. We would meet at the top, as the culmination of this unified effort. The task would be hard, the climb exhausting, but with dedication and effort we can achieve our goal.

It's possible that we each decide that the peak is out of reach, that we decide to climb as high as we can, and come together at that point. The Illusion of Unity happens when the two of us are together, but Lord is still waiting for our obedience.

He is in the room. His opinion counts. Slaughter has the right idea. Let's always vote "Yes" when Jesus votes "Yes."

