

# **BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH**

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**SERIES : "LIFE TOGETHER"**

**TOPIC : "2 Marks Of Genuine Christian Community"**

**STUDY 5 : Sunday, February 29, 2004 "UNITY"**

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES : "LIFE TOGETHER"**

"Life Together" is a series of studies on the foundational aspects of Christian Community. During February the topics will be "3 Basic Commitments" and "2 Evidences of a Genuine Christian Community" Each Topic within the Series will have the number of studies in it as indicated in the topic's name.

As we begin our ministry together, I invite you on a journey with me ... to rediscover the basics of God's intention for us as his people. It is on this foundation that we must build our life together and with these principles we must shape the future of our ministry to the community around us.

## **INTRO. TO THE TOPIC : "2 MARKS OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY"**

Jesus spoke plainly about two particular characteristics that would be evident in those who followed him. Those characteristics are : "love" and "Unity"

Further, he invited the world to observe the disciple's life together and to judge them on the basis of the presence, or absence, of these two characteristics

**These are the Evidences of Genuine Christian Community because :**

Jesus invites a watching world to judge :

**1** .... if we are truly FOLLOWING him by the love we have one for another.

*"The world will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." ... John 13:35*

**2.** .... the validity of his MINISTRY by observing the unity of his disciples.

*"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me." ... John 17:24*

## **Study 5 : "Unity"**

### **A : THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY**

Acts 16 records the birth of the Church in Philippi; among the first to follow Jesus were:

1. A wealthy BUSINESS women
2. A former demon possessed SLAVE girl
3. The town's JAILER. ... most likely a retired soldier.

Did God know what he was doing? They were so different from each other :

Consider their Social / Economic status, World View and Life's experiences

What unified them? .....JESUS

This principle is clearly illustrated by the events on the Day of Pentecost. Peter delivered the very first Christian sermon to a crowd of pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from every nation in the known world. (Acts 2 : 8-12) The content of the sermon was Jesus and his death and resurrection.

*"God has made this Jesus ..... both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36) : Who Jesus IS*

*".. whom you crucified .." (Acts 2:36 see also 23,24,38) : What Jesus came to DO*

About 3000 people responded to Peter's sermon and formed the first Christian Church. Given their diverse background, their UNITY was the result of :

AGREEING about Jesus - their common affirmation of His "Person" (who he is )

and of his "Work" (what he came to do)

RECEIVING his forgiveness (their common experience of God's grace)

## **B : MORE CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT**

### **1. UNITY ABOUT WHO JESUS IS**

*"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard SO THAT YOU MAY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH US. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" .... 1 John 1:3*

John's message was about Jesus (what we have seen and heard.) Unity with his readers depended on their acceptance of, and agreement with, that message.

In his Gospel, John boldly declares that Jesus was fully GOD (Jn1:1-3, 8:58)

In his first letter, he just as boldly declares that Jesus was fully HUMAN (1Jn4:1-3)

Who Jesus is, is the crucial issue : *"No one who denies the Son, has the Father"* (1Jn2:23)

### **2. UNITY ABOUT WHAT JESUS CAME TO DO**

Paul's was deeply troubled that false teachers had been received by the Galation Christians. They were *"perverting the gospel"* (Gal1:6-7) by teaching a person had to earn their standing before God. (Gal4:9-11) Those who listened to this *"different gospel, which is no gospel at all"* were *"deserting the one who called you"* (Gal1:6-9)

Here, what Jesus came to do is the critical issue. How then, is a person accepted by God?

Justified by obeying the Law or by trusting what Jesus has done? (Gal2:15-16, 19-20)

If the former, *"Christ died for nothing"* (Gal2:21b).

## **C : SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

a. A shared faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour joins us together in TRUE unity  
(Gal3:26-28; Eph4:4-6)

b. In this unity all human distinctions and divisions are ABOLISHED (Gal3:28)

The basis of unity is Christ and our experience of his grace. Not our backgrounds, life experiences, social status, racial or sexual differences .... nothing but Christ alone.

*"Baptised into Christ"* (Initiation - Conversion); *"Clothed with Christ"* (Our ongoing Life - his Righteousness) - we are therefore *"one in Christ"* (Unity - our Possession)

This is emphasis of Ephesians 2. Note verses 19-22

c. Since Unity is the result of Christ's ministry, our task is not to create unity but to preserve it.

*"Make every effort to KEEP the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace"* (Eph4:3)

Work hard at maintaining the unity of the fellowship of God's people. Hold back any word, attitude or deed that would damage it.

d. Unity is not UNIFORMITY! *"Now the body is not made of one part, but many"* (1Cor12:14)

Celebrate the differences among the people whom God brings to his family and the different gifts God gives his people. (Eph4:4-7, 11) Recognise that when the whole "body" works, growth and maturity results. (Eph4:12-16)