

# Working Toward Unity

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## WHAT IS UNITY?

### **A. Biblical Unity is Not Individual Uniformity**

1. There were doctrinal disagreements and differences in maturity in NT churches.
  - a. These were not denials of the deity of Christ or the explicit truths of Christianity.
  - b. The differences existed, in part, because brethren disagreed in interpreting God's will.
2. Notice what Paul tells the brethren in **Romans 14**:
  - a. Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. **1**
  - b. Do not judge and condemn your brother with whom you disagree. **2-4**
  - c. Live by faith and follow your conscience as an act of devotion to Christ. **5-9**
  - d. Leave judgment of these matters to God, to whom judgment belongs. **10-12**
  - e. Do not put a stumbling block in front of your brother who is serving the Lord. **13-21**
  - f. Do what is right, and do not require anyone to do what he/she believes is wrong. **22-23**
3. Unity among these brethren did not depend on everyone coming to doctrinal agreement.
  - a. Instead, unity could be achieved with the right foundation and the right attitude.
  - b. The foundation for unity was not perfect agreement; it was a common faith in the Lord.

### **B. Biblical Unity is Recognizing Unity in the Lord**

1. The unity Paul sought to preserve was the unity already created by God in Christ. **Ro. 15:7**
  - a. Paul urged brethren to diligently preserve the unity of the Spirit. **Eph. 4:1-6**
  - b. Unity isn't inventing a basis for relationship; it is recognizing what God has done.
2. The brethren in Rome wanted to add requirements to the conditions for unity.
  - a. They wanted to make food and days part of the platform for fellowship.
  - b. But these were matters of judgment left to the individual, not requirements of God.
3. Are we sometimes guilty of trying to add requirements to God's platform for unity?
  - a. Must a brother agree with us on every point of doctrine for us to consider him sound?
  - b. Can I worship where not everyone agrees on everything? All of us do so right now!

## WHY SHOULD WE BE INTERESTED IN UNITY?

- A. Because Unity Glorifies God (Eph. 2:14, 19-21; Ro. 15:5-6)**
- B. Because Unity Evangelizes the Lost (Jn. 17:20-21; 13:34-35)**
- C. Because Unity Edifies God's People (Ro. 15:1-3)**
- D. Because Unity is Pleasant and Good (Ps. 133:1)**

## HOW CAN WE WORK TOWARD UNITY?

### **A. Sincerely Love Your Brethren**

1. Love is more important than being right; truth without love is empty. **1Co. 8:1-2; 13:2**
2. Don't just say you love your brethren. Truly, actively show love for them. **1Jn. 3:16-18**

### **B. Keep Your Mind and Bible Open**

1. You can't learn if you think you already know. Are you willing to see you are wrong?
2. People who are wise are willing to study, be taught, and concede. **Ac. 17:11; Ja. 3:17-18**

### **C. Listen to What Others are Saying**

1. You don't know what anyone thinks until you allow him to explain it to you. **Pr. 18:13**
2. Don't assume you know; your brother may have reasons you have never considered.

### **D. Be Patient and Allow Time to Grow**

1. We don't have to agree on everything; we certainly don't have to today. **Php. 3:15-16**
2. Unity gives all of us a chance to grow; division only crystallizes our current ignorance.

### **E. Don't Judge Others Based on Your Own Conclusions**

1. We need to be careful about drawing lines of fellowship when scripture is not explicit.
2. We should not force others to accept our judgment, or exclude them if they don't.
3. Scripture does not speak with equal clarity on every issue; we need to use discernment.