
Words of Truth

Peace And Unity In The Local Church Takes Work

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I pay attention to the search results on my website. Some search results on my website indicate to me that there are people out in this world trying to figure out how peace and unity can exist without compromising the truth. I decided to write this article to help whoever that is in their studies of this subject matter. Please understand that if I had ten pages to write on this subject, I still would not be able to exhaust this subject matter. So, this study is intended to be a starting point. I invite anyone with further questions to study with me about the matter.

God expects both peace and unity among His people (Psalms 133:1, John 17:20-23, Acts 2:46, Romans 12:16, Romans 15:6, II Corinthians 13:11, Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:2, Colossians 3:15, I Thessalonians 5:13, and II Timothy 2:22). Unity comes about by having no divisions among the saints and being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (I Corinthians 1:10). Peace comes about by following after the lawful things that make for peace (Romans 14:19). We will see in this brief study that peace and unity does not mean we are all at the same stage of growth, have the same knowledge, etc.

God also requires us [saints] to stand unwaveringly for the truth (Galatians 1:6-10, Galatians 2:1-5, II Timothy 1:13, Hebrews 10:23, II John 1:9-11, and Jude 1:3-4). True unity is not arrived at by comprising so that all parties get their way. True unity comes about when we walk by the same rule (Philippians 3:16). We all should know that the Lord is the rule maker and we follow His authority (Colossians 3:16-17 and I John 2:3-6).

All of the above sounds really simple. It's not though. In a congregation there will be weak and strong members (I Corinthians 12:14-27). There will be those who have weak consciences and those that have strong consciences (Romans 14:1-15:9). There will be babes in Christ (I Peter 2:1-2). There will be those whom are mature (Titus 2:2-5). There will be brethren with many different talents and at different levels of understanding. That means the expectations will be different (Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 12:41-48). There will be those that are tempted by things that others are not. Those are undeniable facts. Yet, even in congregations like Corinth where they struggled with carnality so much that it hindered their learning (I Corinthians 3:1-3), they were still supposed to be unified and at peace among themselves (II Corinthians 13:11). How is that accomplished? Do you withdraw from everyone the moment they don't get it like some think they should? Do you throw up your hands and give up? What is to be done to bring about peace and unity the right way? You work at it!

True Unity And Peace Comes Through Hard Work

True unity and peace will not occur without a lot of hard work by the saints. Think about this: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:1-6). Did you notice the word “forbearing”? That word means: “put up with: — bear with, endure, forbear, suffer” (Strong’s # 430). Did you notice the word “endeavouring”? That word means: “to make effort, be prompt or earnest: — do (give) diligence, be diligent (forward), endeavour, labour, study” (Strong’s # 4704). Now, back up and reread the text above. Unity and peace requires us to work through problems among us.

In reputedly sound congregations (i.e. I Thessalonians 1:7-8), there will be work that needs to be done (I Thessalonians 5:12-14). This is where people sometimes struggle in knowing what to do. Remember the words endeavouring, longsuffering, and forbearance.

Some issues among saints require more teaching. That is what evangelists are at work doing (Titus 1:5). Faithful evangelists are cut out for this work as they are capable of being balanced wherein they can be longsuffering without compromising the truth (II Timothy 2:23-25 and II Timothy 4:1-5). That doesn’t mean evangelists are required for peace and unity though. Teaching is not limited to evangelists (Acts 18:24-28 and Titus 2:3-5). What is required, regardless of who is teaching, is knowing when to teach. There will be times something needs taught, but the person(s) needing taught aren’t yet ready to learn (Mark 4:33, John 16:12, and Hebrews 4:14-6:3). If you cannot draw that distinction, don’t try to teach.

Aside from teaching, if you read I Thessalonians 5:12-14 you saw that warning, comforting, edifying, and support needs to occur. Can you do one or more of those things? That is the work required for saints to be at peace and unity. It is an unending work. If you read through the epistles you see that things that needed work among the saints did not come to some concluding point. Be prepared to stay at work without wavering (I Corinthians 15:58).

Conclusion

Sometimes people stress over the subjects of peace and unity. We have to understand that we cannot be sure we know others (I Timothy 5:24-25). With that, we must know we are not accountable for what we do not know for sure. To become private investigators in the lives of brethren is wrong (I Peter 4:15). You cannot take preemptive measures or judge according to appearances to try dealing with the unknown either (John 6:60-71 and John 7:24). So, don’t think peace and unity are all on you. Simply follow the pattern stated above!