



Sent by God: His People on His Mission

LESSON 9: Values--Unity

Our Values

Last week, we introduced six values that guide this church and give us identity. These values reflect our mission and shape us as a church. Here is brief review and summary.

Truth. We value truth, we value biblical teaching. This commitment calls us to be *approved workers*.

Unity. We value unity, we seek peaceful harmony. We seek unity in God's Spirit as *spiritual brothers*.

Touch. God's presence touches, loves and cares. God touches our world through us, his *ambassadors*. We value caring evangelism.

Christian Living. To live like Jesus acknowledges that he calls us to be like him, his *disciples*.

Love. Our desire to love like Jesus shows in all our relationships, but especially in our commitment to be the *family of God*.

Ministry. We want to equip and empower one another, recognizing that all are called to be *servants*.

Truth and Unity

Last week we noted that two great pillars of the restoration plea are truth and unity. These exist in a tension that often lessens one as the other increases. As a result, many today have given up on one or the other of these foundational values.

These tensions must be discussed by any church committed to being a church for all people. What is the source of genuine unity? What does it mean to be committed to truth?

This week our focus is on unity and God's desire for peace, harmony, and forgiveness among his people.

Unity

Jesus' Gethsemane prayer is probably best known for his desire for the unity of his followers. In this prayer, Jesus also acknowledged that the word of God is

truth (John 17:17). This prayer connects the concepts of truth and unity.

Jesus' prayer for the unity of believers (17:21) has two results (vv. 21-24). First, the world believes in Jesus as the one sent from God because of the unity of his followers. Second, the world knows the love of God through the complete unity of believers. In the midst of churches that sometimes seek to evangelize the world by preaching the truth 'harder and harder', what do these verses say about how the world knows God's love and Jesus as the demonstration of that love?

Paul's emphasis on unity in Ephesians 4:3 is immediately followed by the 'seven ones'. Are these seven basic concepts sufficient to unite true believers? Can you accept as a brother a person who acknowledges all of these?

Paul goes on to describe the goal as reaching unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and becoming mature (v. 13). How does unity in the faith differ from unity in the knowledge of the Son of God?

Paul concludes this section by noting that our unity depends upon the harmony of the body as it works together according to the plan of God, reaching maturity in Christ (vv. 12-16). This kind of unity keeps the body strong—less likely to be tossed back and forth by the influences around it. The value of being spiritual brothers in the Lord shows in our shared lives and in our individual Christian lives.

One connection between unity and truth is that unity keeps us stronger in truth. It may be true that truth unites us, but the Bible makes just as strong a case for the opposite: that unity enhances and is evidence of our commitment to truth.

