

Recap series:

First two weeks are kind of trying to lay out a case for this concept. Not just a group of folks, not an organization, not a movement even.

It's described as a family, all throughout Scripture, in various forms and methods, but always with the heart of a family.

So those first two weeks were laying that out.

The next few are shifting to work through how that family works, and what it's about.

Family values - you know those signs that are calligraphy and reclaimed wood.  
"In this family," blah blah blah

Today: the family unites

If we are to really embrace the church as a family, we must pursue a oneness that can only be experienced through Jesus.

Call out the elephant in the room, the term "unity" has some baggage.  
I hate how society, from many different perspectives and directions, takes a word and makes it so much more complicated than it needs to be.

It is obviously very important to Jesus that we are unified as His Church.

*I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their word. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me. (John 17:20-23)*

So pretty straightforward. He wants it, begs us to be one. And honestly, I don't know how hard this needs to be defended.

Probably a good question to ask: Do we desire it as much as He does?

Story – Guatemala, yearn to be reunited with my kids  
As frustrating as they can be, as much work as it is, I want to be with them, heart and soul.

Jesus wants that for us. And I think, for the vast majority, we like the idea too, even if just theoretically. I'm just saying, I've never met someone who genuinely wants division.

We all want unity. That doesn't need to be super talked through.

But what it **is** and how we get there, that is what takes so much work.

Many places in Scripture talk about it.

It's a major theme throughout the Bible and especially the New Testament Church.

But today I want to take us to one passage that lays out a few ways to pursue this unity in our family.

### Background of Colossians 3

*Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:11-17)*

I won't lie, and I don't know if anyone else feels this, but this is a tall order, isn't it? That we would treat each other in this way.

First: family unity requires clarity (Person of Jesus)

Vs 11- it's all about Jesus

None of these things is what defines us in our new self, our new life with Jesus, not ethnicities or nationalities or traditions or status. Just Jesus. He is it.

This sentiment is elevated all throughout the Bible, both in what was written to the early church, and in what Jesus did when He walked this Earth.

"We unify around the person of Jesus." That's easy to say but what are we actually supposed to DO?

What is great about this is, if we are clear that we unify around Jesus, it actually gives us all kinds of practical values and actions to put into practice. Because if we unify around the person of Jesus we trust and believe ALL of what He says. We do what He says to do. That's it.

Even though it's not as cut and dry as unifying around some way of thinking or approach to life, He is the best thing to rally our life around, to unify our relationships around, because in Him, there is a diverse group of people, but it creates a harmony because of Who is in charge.

Unity is not carbon copies of each other, although some of us might like that and think it would be easier, but it's more like a symphony of people, with Jesus as the conductor, bringing it all together.

And this can happen, if we choose it. I saw a beautiful example of this just a few weeks ago.

Guatemala team, not the most alike team we have ever taken, but maybe one of the most unified.

We cannot settle for anything less than Jesus being the source of our unity and settling can be all too easy to do.

Sometimes we can even settle for just parts of Who Jesus is as what we rally around, but we must resist the temptation.

Second thing I think is important for us to consider is this:

Family unity cannot be outsourced.

Outsourcing - Van conversation with my parents

Super Nanny show

Family unity takes work. We have to be intentional.

I am a big believer in the idea of sanctification, that we would more and more look like Jesus, even respond like Jesus as time goes on as we follow Him, but I am also a big believer in the tensions between the flesh and the spirit that is so evidently explained in Scripture. Choices matter, and we have work to do.

The beautiful thing about this is that our pursuit of unity actually makes us look more like Jesus, function more like Jesus, because we are pursuing the body working as it should.

Originally as we put this together, this week was called family cares - that we care deeply about each other, we sacrifice for each other, we meet each other's needs, we grieve and rejoice with

each other, and that's true and good, and necessary conversation, but as we got closer to today, it kind of became clear that the only real honest way to care for each other like that is to be so one with each other that we actually can.

That list is extensive, and maybe you're better than me, but I would have a hard time, if we are being honest, doing all of those things, at cost to myself, for just anyone because I was "supposed to." But I would do it in a heartbeat for my kids and wife, because I love them, and we are one. Reminds me of the golden rule Jesus talks about.

What to do?

If we look at our life, and see a rift in unity with other believers, take one step to fix that.