

Calvary Chapel *of Hope*

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Unity, Diversity and Division that Glorifies God

There is a unity that glorifies God. There is a diversity that glorifies God. There is a division that glorifies God. God is clear on what unity, diversity and division is acceptable to Him and brings glory to Him. The Bible reveals that in the Last Days there will be a one world religion. This religion of unity is referred to as *Mystery Babylon* and has its roots at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). This false religious system will ultimately be brought down by God (cf. Revelation 17). The unity of *Mystery Babylon* is not glorifying to God but opposes God with all deception and rebellion against Him and His word. This false unity is on the rise today. That is a unity true Christians do not want to be a part of. Having a Biblical God ordained understanding of how unity, diversity and division relate to one another is critical to glorifying God by both what we participate in and what we separate from.

What marks the unity that glorifies God? Jesus expressed that one of His main purposes was to bring a unity to His followers that would be representative of the unity He experienced in the Triune Godhead (John 17:20-23). It glorifies God when people come together who are steadfastly devoted to the Bible, fellowship, worship and prayer (Acts 2:42-47). God is glorified by the unity of those who hold to “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” with “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” and where the Holy Spirit dwells (Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:4-6; Philippians 2:1-2).

What marks the diversity that glorifies God? Jesus acknowledged diversity in ministry (Mark 9:38-41). He initially came to give the gospel to Israel but thank God He also spoke of opening the gospel to the diversity of the Gentile world! (John 10:16). When people of different races, nations, actual genders, financial means, intellectual capacities, and cultural backgrounds come together in Christ, it glorifies God. When people who have different spiritual giftings, callings and roles in the church (1 Corinthians 12) come together in the love of Jesus (1 Corinthians 13) it glorifies God. When people who worship God differently come together it glorifies God. Whenever people who agree in the essentials of the faith but differ in nonessentials of the faith come together, it glorifies God.

Diversity in the body of Christ is good. We can all learn from those who are different from us. And diversity is necessary to make us whole. God Himself is diverse in that He is One God in Three persons. My wife and I are different in many ways. She is a woman. I am a man. She is practical. I am not always practical. I am big and strong. She is delicate and soft. She sees things I do not always see. I see things she does not always see. Separately we might be vulnerable.

Together we are strong and watch each others' back. The same is true of the church. When churches unite regardless of denomination, location, or mode of worship, it glorifies God. People in the church are different in many ways but our differences make us stronger. Our differences make us more versatile, perceptive, sensitive to the needs of the lost and empathetic. Our differences enable us to watch each other's back. Such diversity does not only glorify God, it is the will of God.

What marks the division that glorifies God? Division based on prejudice, ignorance and a lack of love never glorifies God. Division characterized by backbiting and gossip in the church does not glorify God. But there is a division that glorifies God. God glorified Himself when His people separated from Egypt (Exodus 4-14). And when God's people were about to enter the Promised Land He warned them through Moses to remain separate from the pagan peoples, false prophets and their false teaching (Deuteronomy 7; 13 and 18). God tells us to watch out for those who cause division because of doctrinal deception and false teaching and that we are to "keep away from them" (Romans 16:17). It is not doctrine or the teaching of God's word that we are to keep away from; we are to unite in the truth of God's word. We are to stay away from those who teach false doctrine. Whether a person or group holds to the teaching of God's word determines whether they belong to God and so this is eternally important and therefore worth dividing over (2 John 9).

What makes this area of division a bit more complicated sometimes is the mindset expressed by the Arabian quote *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*. There are certain circumstances and situations in life where we are tempted to join with those who we had previously opposed to unite in confronting a common foe. Is it ever right to unite with a secular group or religious group who has unscriptural or Christ denying ways? There are many diverse groups that oppose abortion, immorality, and what we would call sin. Uniting with those who believe differently than God says in His word is permissible if and only if you can maintain your scriptural Christian identity. But don't allow yourself to be manipulated into a situation where you compromise the truth of God's word. If uniting in such situations means approving of or condoning sin or scriptural heresy and falsehood, then it would be better to fight whatever cause it is separately. God put Joseph in a position that was second in command to Pharaoh of pagan Egypt to save the messianic line (Genesis 37-50). God used the pagan Persian King Artaxerxes to help Nehemiah rebuild the walls of the holy city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-2). God can use the unsaved for His purposes. And it is by infiltration rather than isolation that we can be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). In such situations we serve as a restraining force against evil (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).

But the Bible also says we are to "come out" and not be "unequally yoked with" unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6). We are not to be united with unbelievers in a way that disregards the holy difference of God's people. Unity with the ACLU, NOW, or the Church of Satan would not glorify God but division from them would. A worship service where Christians unite with Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and other religions would be inappropriate because all of these groups define "God" in unscriptural and even blasphemous ways. What about certain church movements? Would it glorify God to unite with churches that ordain homosexuals or who perform same sex marriages or who approve of abortion, even partial birth abortion? No, divisions from such groups and opposition to their sin by proclaiming the truth of God's word in

love to them is what would bring glory to God. What about uniting with those who claim to be a church but whose teachings denies the truth of God's word? For instance, what if a "church" group denies the deity of Christ or teaches that salvation is by works and not by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone? What if a "church" teaches that Jesus is not the only way of salvation but that there are many roads of many religions that are acceptable to God? (See John 14:6 and Acts 4:12.) Do we really want to unite with "churches" that misrepresent God? God is clear on how He feels about those who misrepresent Him; His judgment is on them. God barred Moses from the Promised Land because he misrepresented God (Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:1-13). God allowed His people to be defeated and taken into captivity because of their associations with pagan sinful peoples and adopting their sinful religious practices (2 Chronicles 36:14-21). The New Testament is full of exhortations to maintain purity and unity in the teachings of God's holy word (for example Jude 3-4). When we divide from those who disregard or rebel against God, it glorifies God. It glorifies God because it demonstrates we put Him and His word above the comfort that comes from tolerance of sin and compromising the truth He has revealed (for example Matthew 5:10-16; 10:32-39). But even if we disagree with someone and have to remain separate from them, it should still always be in love (John 13:34-35). Making the distinction and separating from the groups I just mentioned is clear cut to anyone who respects and holds dear God and His word. We speak the truth in love and share the gospel with such groups, but we do not unite with them. Division sometimes glorifies God.

There is a unity, diversity and a division that glorifies God. I pray we obey God and submit to Him in these things and that He is glorified greatly as a result.

Sincerely in Christ seeking to glorify Him,

Pastor Claude