

Group Resource

Sermon Notes – Sunday, April 26, 2015

Series: Why Church?
Message: Unity through Agreement, Part I
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 4:32-35

- I. In this series, we are examining God’s design for the church and the powerful impact that the church can make in this world.
- II. “The church is one in essence, because it is founded on one gospel, united to one Lord and indwelt by one Spirit. Its unity is under constant threat because of the tendency to division that is inherent in fallen humanity, and needs to be continually maintained and actively expressed in fellowship.”
Manser, M. H. (2009). Dictionary of Bible Themes.
- III. Ephesians 4 reminds us that the work of the church continues until we all reach “**unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.**”
- IV. True unity doesn’t happen automatically. Unity is continually built up through agreement.
 - a. Amos 3:3 asks the question – “Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?”
 - b. **Agreement is “Being of one mind and one heart with another”** In essence, it means to say the same thing.
 - c. The Bible highlights the power that comes from agreement: **Matthew 18:19–20**¹⁹ “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.”²⁰ *For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.*”
- V. What does unity through agreement look like in the church?
 - a. The book of Acts records the launching of the 1st Century church from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. The church thrived because the members were united and in agreement
 - b. **Acts 4:32** *All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.*
 - c. God’s church makes a powerful impact in the earth when unity is built up through prioritized agreement.
- VI. There are three essential areas of agreement in the church. Agreement not only benefits the individual members of the church; it allows the church, as a whole, to make the most impact.
 - a. Agreement with God
 - b. Agreement with Delegated Leadership
 - c. Agreement with One Another
- VII. What is the difference between agreement and prioritized agreement?
 - a. When establishing agreement in the church, it is more than the 3 elements that matter – it’s the order that allows the church to thrive.

- b. For example, if you are looking for the church to always be politically correct – then you won't find a NT biblical church that fits your criteria. While God calls us to be involved in shaping the political worldview, the politics of the day and age cannot be the supreme authority for the doctrines of the church. Otherwise, the church would not be the universal church but a cultural institution.
- c. As a church, we may wrestle with how a doctrine of the church shapes our approach to a particular political/social issue (worldview) – but we cannot violate agreement with God in order to promote our personal preferences in the church.

VIII. 1st Level of Prioritized Agreement In The Church: **Agreement with God**

- a. Acts 4 records Peter and John preaching the gospel and healing a lame man in Jerusalem. The religious council couldn't deny the miracle that took place but they commanded the disciples to never speak or teach in the name of Jesus.
 - i. The Apostles responded to their instructions with a bold question: ¹⁹“Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? ²⁰We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20)
 - ii. In Chapter 5, Peter and John replied a second time to the religious council: Acts 5:29 - “We must obey God rather than any human authority.”
- b. The modern-day church should have the same level of boldness to agree with God above all things.
 - i. Agreement with God means that we walk as circumcised people whom have been set apart by God. In the OT, the physical act of circumcision was required to be a part of the fellowship community. In the NT, spiritual circumcision identifies us as part of the community of the redeemed of the Lord
 - ii. **Colossians 2:11** When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.
- c. How can we walk in agreement with God?
 - i. **We identify WITH Him.** We can't identify WITH him – if we don't KNOW Him. Otherwise, we are perpetrators. To identify with Him, we must explore the ways in which He has revealed himself: through His Word and through the experiences of life.
 - ii. **We submit to Him.** Agreement means that we commit to saying the same thing that God has said about our lives. We submit our plans, our desires, our hopes and dreams and allow God to edit and direct the steps for each of them.
 - iii. **We depend on Him.** Agreement requires commitment from each individual. Prayer becomes the lifeline of agreement with God because our faith depends on regular communion and fellowship.
 - iv. **We walk like Him.** Agreement changes the way that we choose to live out our life. By agreeing with God, we choose to live in a way that honors Him even at the most personal cost
 - v. **We talk like Him.** Agreement with God means that His word is hidden in our hearts and minds and that we meditate upon it day and night. Our speech reflects our confidence in what God is saying.

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Let's Talk Notes– Sunday, April 26, 2015

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- 1) What phrase(s) best describes your concept of unity. Give an example in which unity has made an impact in achieving a goal/outcome.
- 2) What does the church look like when the church reaches unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son. What are some of the threats to maintaining unity in the church? Give an example of how the church can make a powerful impact in the earth through agreement.
- 3) **Read Acts 5:17 – 32.** What opposition did the Apostles face? How did they remain unified through agreement despite the opposition to their message? What would have happened to the message of the gospel if they agreed to what the religious council asked them to do?
- 4) Have you ever wrestled with how the doctrines of the church shape your approach to a particular political/social issue?
- 5) Pastor Joseph mentioned that the modern-day church should have the same boldness to agree with God above all things. What are some of the consequences if you do not prioritize agreement with God? From the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-8), find 2-3 instructions that we should agree with God about how to treat our fellow man.
- 6) The sermon highlighted 5 ways that we can walk in agreement with God: We identify, submit, depend, walk like and talk like Him. Give a real-life scenario of how you can practice each area of agreement. Are there any areas that you find challenging to implement in your life?