

The Work of Unity

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As I have been seeking to be transformed by Ephesians, I find the most challenging command to be the one in Ephesians 4:3 ? ?Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.? I love the idea of unity. It?s the pursuit of unity that I find so difficult.

I have been in countless situations where tension and dissension are swirling around a group. Often, tension is primarily expressed in side conversations rather than as an agenda item. These conversations are pretty fun. My friends and I talk about the problem. We analyze the issues and the people involved. Internally I align myself with one ?side? or another, all the while being friendly and positive when in group meetings. Disunity has already begun its work of poisoning my heart and the community.

But Paul?s letter to the Ephesians asks so much more of me. It asks ? no, it commands ? that I make every effort towards unity. What is it about unity that requires work and effort?

I think what I want is cheap unity ? a sense of togetherness and oneness that feels good but doesn?t take any real work. I know that a vibrant marriage requires communication, forgiveness, compromise, and sacrificial love. Just saying ?we are one? doesn?t build a marriage that can stand the test of time. Why wouldn?t it be the same in Christian community? Perhaps because I think of our oneness in the Body of Christ as ?spiritual? I expect unity to magically appear rather than be built and developed.

The work of making every effort towards unity among Christians is hard because it requires me to grow and change. It means searching my heart for pride. It means getting to the place where I can speak the truth in love, rather than punitively. It requires me to risk having uncomfortable conversations with those I respect or am intimidated by. It tests my commitment to truth and integrity?. Honestly, it is so much easier to gossip about a situation rather than address it in a way that leads to growth and health for the community.

Ephesians helps me to ask myself, ?Is there any other effort I can make that would help this situation turn into one that builds unity?? The world would surely notice if every Christian asked that question.