



As I've said many times, I'm deeply grateful for and appreciative of our team of elders. These are men called to shepherd this body of believers and they do so with great skill, integrity and sacrifice.

Last year at this time I shared a message with you that was summarized in just three words: sow more seed. The idea behind that was if we're going to really make and mature more followers of Christ we need to sow more seed. As we've seen, I think we did a good job of that this past year.

This year, I want us to continue to sow more seed, but I want us to focus on something different. Two words: Stay One! When I coached Little League baseball I used to get our team together before the first game and use an object lesson to teach them an important truth. I'd hold up a pencil and ask which of the kids could snap that pencil in two with their bare hands. All the hands would go up. I'd pick one and he'd go on to show his massive strength by snapping the pencil in two. Then I'd pull out a whole bunch of pencils held together with a couple of rubber bands. I'd hold that up and ask which one of them could snap that with their bare hands. Inevitably, several kids would try but no one could ever do it. The lesson was simple: We're stronger together than we are alone. As individuals we're weak and breakable, but put us together as one and we're so much better.

We all know CPC is one church. We have one team of elders, one staff and one budget. But in the past few years, we've divided ourselves. We now meet on three campuses that are miles apart. The distance between our North campus in San Bruno and our South campus in Redwood City is 20 miles. Each campus has staff that focus on the ministries of that particular campus. Each one has people who identify primarily with that campus. We have people who attend our North or South campuses who have never even been to our campus in Foster City and never met me except on a video screen. There are many in Foster City who have never even been to our other campuses. We're still one church, but we're divided at least by one thing, and that's where we meet.

I believe that presents us with a challenge as a church. The challenge is to stay one. In 1858, before he was even President, Abraham Lincoln spoke at the Illinois State Capital in Springfield. He was addressing the division between slave states and free states in the United States at the time and he began his speech with those famous words, "A house divided against itself cannot

stand." He didn't come up with those words himself. He was quoting Jesus in Matthew 12:25. Jesus was talking about the kingdom of darkness; Lincoln was talking about a nation, but it's also true of a church. "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

### **The Gift of Unity**

You see it in both the Old and New Testaments. We've been looking at the book of Psalms for the past few weeks. Recently I ran across a psalm that speaks of unity.

**How good and pleasant it is  
when God's people live together in unity!  
It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.  
It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.  
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore (Psalm 133).**

There are several things we see here. The most obvious thing is unity is good and pleasant. We all get that. Have you ever been part of something where everyone worked together; everyone got along; everyone was on the same page to accomplish a goal? It is good! It is pleasant! We all want to be a part of something like that.

There's even something holy about it. The psalmist emphasizes this in verse 2 when he says: "*It is like precious oil poured on the head running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.*" In our culture, we don't usually pour olive oil on someone's head, but in biblical times it was common. Oil was used to anoint priests and kings, signifying consecration to God and to special service. But the oil David speaks of in this verse was especially sacred, because it was used to anoint the High Priest—Aaron. This oil was so sacred that anyone who used it for common purposes was to be put to death. There's a sense in which the experience of unity is sacred and holy; it sets us apart as a community to be used by God in a unique way.

Not only does it set us apart, it also brings refreshment; it brings life! The psalmist says it's as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mt. Zion. Mt Hermon was in the northern part of Israel and it

was known for its heavy dew that produced beautiful plant life. Mt. Zion was in Jerusalem and it was hot, dry and barren. Unity brings refreshment and life to our barren lives.

But the most important thing this psalm communicates is where this all comes from; how it's accomplished. Notice he says this is a blessing that the Lord bestows. Unity isn't manufactured by us; it comes from God. This is subtly brought out in this psalm through repetition. Twice it says the oil *descends* on Aaron's beard, and then it says the dew of Hermon *descends* on Zion. The idea is that the gift of unity is something that descends from above. It's not an achievement; it's a gift. It's not something we create; it's a blessing that God gives. It's not a matter of methodology; it's a matter of God.

## The Keeping of Unity

The same thing is taught in the New Testament. As followers of Christ, each of us have been mysteriously placed into the body of Christ. We're united with him and thus we're united with another. Just like in a family where you are born into it and you don't get to choose who your brothers and sisters are, the body of Christ is a family we're born into and there's a unity that's there whether we get along or not.

No where is this brought out more clearly than in Ephesians 4. Listen to what Paul wrote.

**As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:1–6).**

Notice he talks about the *"unity of the Spirit."* There's one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of us all. We are one because of all those things. But notice he also says we must *"make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."* In other words, we're to stay one because we are one. Christians haven't always been real good at that. In the New Testament there's frequent squabbling among the disciples. The Jerusalem church fought over the allocation of funds for the relief of widows. Peter and Paul had it out in Antioch because Peter refused to eat with Gentiles. There were all the different factions in Corinth, each one identifying with a different Christian leader. There was the dissension between Paul and Barnabas over whether to bring John Mark with them on the second missionary journey. They couldn't work it out and they parted company. You can see why Paul says, *"make every effort..."*

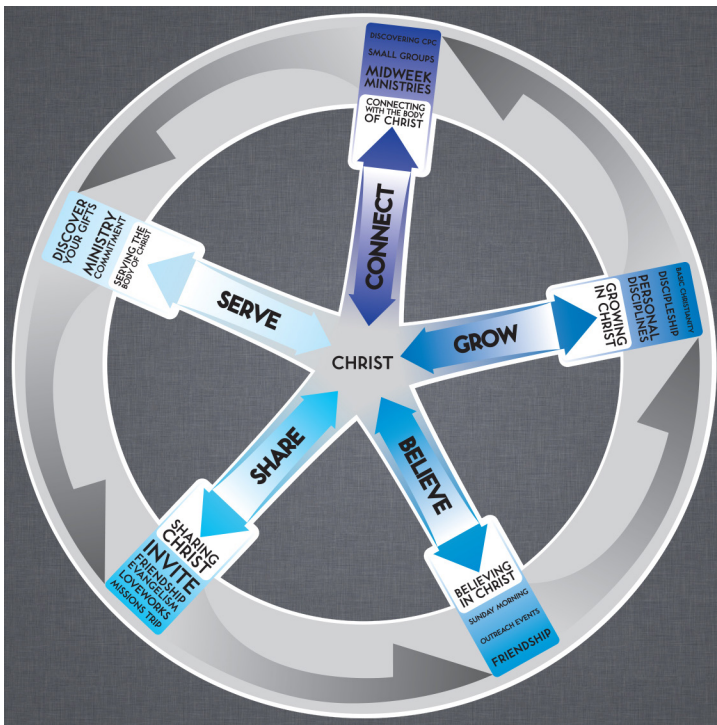
How do we do that? How do we at CPC—a church with three very different campuses—make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit? How do we Stay One? I believe we can apply this both personally and corporately. Unity in personal relationships requires Christlike character. That's what Paul was talking about in verse 2 when he said, *"Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love."* We're going to learn a lot about that in the coming weeks as we study the letters of John. John's letters can be summed up in one sentence: He's loved you, now you go love one another!

But I'd like to talk more this morning about corporate unity; the unity of CPC as one church on three campuses and how we can live that out. Corporate unity in a church involves alignment in three areas:

First, there has to be a unity of purpose. We have a very clear purpose statement I hope you all have learned: to make and mature more followers of Christ. You've already heard that several times this morning. That's what we're about. We're not all about helping the poor or changing our national politics or restoring the family. Those are all good things, but that's not our purpose. Our purpose is to win people to Christ and build them up in their faith. Stay One in your purpose!

Second, there has to be a unity of priorities. These are things we believe are non-negotiable as we try to accomplish our purpose. Earlier you saw the video that describes our Core Values. These are the things that define us as we try to accomplish our mission. Six priorities: We'll worship God. We'll teach the Bible. We'll live in community. We'll show grace to one another. We'll share the gospel. We'll trust God to direct us through the leadership of elders. That's who we are. That is what's important to us. Stay One in your priorities!

Finally, there has to be a unity of process. What does that mean? That means across all three of our campuses there's alignment on the process by which a person can become a mature follower of Jesus. For example, if you go rafting you'll go through a sequential process. First, you get oriented to the concept of rafting. You don't start by jumping in the river and taking on a level four rapid. You start with an orientation. You select your gear and meet your guide. Second, you get to know the people in your raft. You need each person. You can't paddle the river alone, and the people in your boat make the journey exciting. Third, you become a contributor. At first, the tour guide does most of the work. But, as the journey progresses, the rapids get stronger and he needs everyone in the boat to paddle. Your two strokes forward or three strokes backward make a difference. All that's a process.



So what's our process for making and maturing more followers of Christ? This image helps us to define our process. Notice this is in the shape of a wheel. The hub of the wheel, that which holds the whole thing together, is Jesus Christ. He's at the center of all we do. There are five spokes on this wheel. These are the different experiences a person has as he becomes a mature follower of Christ. Each can be summarized with one word: believe, grow, connect, serve and share.

First, believing Christ. This is how a person becomes a Christian; you place your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You invite him into your life to take control. This can happen at a Sunday morning worship gathering or an outreach event. It can happen as a result of someone sharing Christ with you in their neighborhood or job.

Second, growing in Christ. This happens as the new believer continues to engage in our Sunday morning gatherings. Part of growing in Christ is also learning personal disciplines such as reading the Bible, prayer, giving, etc. A huge help in this stage is

discipleship where a more mature believer comes alongside you as a mentor and guide.

Third, connecting with the body of Christ. The key thing here is for you to join some kind of small group at CPC. We have Community Groups that are a great way for couples and singles, men and women, old and young to develop community with others. We also have small group opportunities in Men's Fraternity, WBS and Young Adults. Discovering CPC is also a great class to help you get connected with CPC.

Fourth, serving the body of Christ. This involves you discovering what your unique gifts and calling are, and then plugging into a ministry where you can use them. God wants to use each of us to build up his body and we all do that in a different way. Unity doesn't mean uniformity! We'll be offering a class to help you learn what your gifts and calling are.

Finally, sharing Christ. We're all called to be a witness; to share our faith in the places we live and work and with the people we know. One way to do that is just to invite someone to church or to our Outdoor Service in October. Our LoveWorks weekend is another way to do that, or you might also go on a missions trip this year. That leads, of course, right back into the process as someone meets Christ and begins to grow.

I want to leave you with two words for this next year: Stay One. Stay One relationally as you love one another as Christ as loved you. Stay One corporately in your purpose, priorities and process. With this in mind, there are three things I want to challenge you to do. First, sometime in the next year visit one of our other campuses that you've never been to. Second, pray for the work God is doing on those other campuses. Third, commit yourself to this process I just described. Ask yourself, Where am I in this wheel? A wheel is meant for movement. It's not meant to be stationary. There are four movements along this wheel. Maybe you need to move from believing to growing, or growing to connecting, or connecting to serving, or serving to sharing. I challenge you not to stay where you are this year!

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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