

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— 5 **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, 6 **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to **each one** of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*

There are three things you need to know about Kwik Trip. The first thing is that I wanted to tell you that I have given up on their donuts. Remember a while back when I mentioned buying their chocolate donuts and then I received about 12 dozen of them from many of you? I thank you again for your attempt to fatten me up as well as give me a heart attack, but I am announcing that I am done with Kwik Trip donuts. If you see me buying one, I'll pay you \$5. Deal?

The second thing you need to know about KT is this little cute moola cow. Who knows how many hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars have been raised for local schools a nickel at a time. He's not quite Ronald McDonald, but he was quite the icon for a while. But did you know that our own Brian Larrington designed the Moola cow? It's true. Even if you knew that fact, you may not have realized that it was a self-portrait. It's too bad they got rid of Moola as their new logo is just horrible, in my opinion.



The third thing I wanted to mention, you already know—that their snack brand is called Urge. Candy, popcorn, nuts, chips and soda. We know why they call it Urge because these sweet and salty snacks urge us to eat them. They promise to satisfy your urge for mostly unhealthy food.

Paul’s encouragement uses the same word. *I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one*

- 1. You are not the same person.**  
*elected, predestined, redeemed, made alive*
- 2. You do not have the same destiny.**  
*received an inheritance; seated with Christ in heaven*
- 3. You are fully accepted by God.**  
*adopted; holy and blameless before him*
- 4. You have a new family.**  
*made us both one; fellow citizens with the saints*
- 5. You have the immeasurable love of God.**  
*love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*
- 6. You have immeasurable power available to you.**  
*immeasurable greatness of his power*

I...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called

*another in love.* He is urging us, begging us to go in a certain direction, and that direction is ‘the calling to which you have been called. If you recall from last week, the calling to which you have been called is all of the blessings and truths from chapters 1-3. I summarized them in six basic principles.

This is all about

becoming who you already are. These things are already true of you, therefore the urging is to live in such a way that reflects these essential truths.

There are as many different ways to live this out as there are people and circumstances. Paul will focus on many different applications in the rest of Ephesians. But right here he is focusing on one application. What does it look like to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called? We should be *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. I like that word eager. Paul is urging us to be eager. That’s a lot of emotion, a lot of motivation there. The Christian life is a passionate one. It’s not boring or unemotional. We are urged to be eager.

The Greek word for eager is really cool. It has the meaning of commitment, extreme effort and speed all rolled into one. It’s like saying, “Hurry up and do your absolute best to get this done. All of that is bound up in the word eager. Other versions translate it as “make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Why is unity so important? Why should we be urged to make every effort to maintain it? How is unity a prime example of living out our faith, so much so that Paul lists it first in his applications? Unity among believers is so vital because it is a living demonstration of the gospel.

Most of us are familiar with the passage on marriage in chapter 5 of Ephesians. It is the go to passage for this topic. The husband and wife relationship is modeled after Christ and the church. Christ is the groom and the church is the bride. God did not create marriage and then say to himself, “Hey, wow. I like this concept. Husband and wife. Commitment. Love. Respect. I think I will build the church around this idea.”

Of course he didn't do it that way. Instead, the relationship between Christ and the church was established first and then marriage was patterned after it. In the same way that the husband and wife relationship is a model of the gospel, the relationship among believers models the gospel. The reason, the explanation is given in verses 4-5.

*4 There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— 5 **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, 6 **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

You can see the obvious repetition of the word one. There is a oneness, a unity splashed all over this page of Scripture. And what we end up with is a doctrinal statement of sorts. It's not a complete statement of faith but it does give us some doctrinal fences. If I put the verses in a slightly different order, you can see some of these a little more clearly.

- one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all
- one Lord
- one Spirit
- one body
- one faith
- one baptism
- one hope that belongs to your call

So to start, we see the Trinity in these verses—Father, Lord and Spirit. Our faith is a Trinitarian faith. That's a key doctrinal fence for us. The last three go together in many ways. One faith, one baptism and one hope that belongs to your call. A very common saying that we have all heard is that there is one god but many paths to the same god. This is a convenient statement about religious tolerance. They throw every religion into a giant soup bowl and stir it all together. "See," they say. "It's all one big melting pot and all religions taste better when they are mixed together.

The only problem is that almost none of the religions they mix together believe that there are many paths to God. Almost every religion has exclusive faith claims. Muslims don't believe that there are many paths to God. If they did, they would not require their converts to confess that "There is only on God and his name is Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." Hindus don't believe this. They don't even believe in one God. There are millions of gods in Hinduism. Jews don't believe this. They believe in Yahweh and are still waiting for the Messiah to appear.

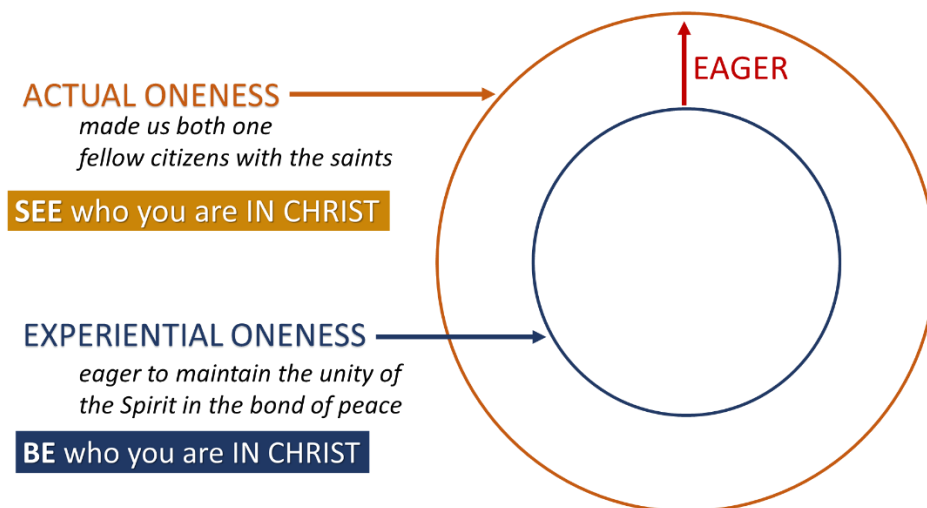
Christians believe in one God who exists in three eternally existing persons, a belief taught all throughout the Bible from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter in Revelation. And we believe in one faith that is expressed through baptism. Baptism does not save but it is a symbol of our salvation, as Colossians 2 so clearly states.

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised*

him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses (Colossians 2:11-13).

One faith, one baptism and one hope that belongs to your call. The hope is the hope of a final resurrection and eternity with Christ. So in these two verses we have the Trinity, monotheism, one faith founded in Christ, baptism and the hope of eternity. Do you see why it is a pretty decent statement of faith? It's not complete but it has most of the core doctrines. The repetition of the word one is a rhetorical device meant to hone in on two things—exclusivity and unity. There is one Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith. If there is only one then it follows that all others are mere pretenders. This is an exclusive claim to truth. But exclusive claims are also unifying. All those who are part of the one faith

But the first one statement is one body. That's what Paul is ultimately driving at here, unity in the body of Christ. We are one body. Therefore, we should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit, which is unity from the work of the Spirit. But if we are already one in the Spirit, why do we need to make every effort to maintain that unity? It takes hard work because there is a difference between our actual oneness in Christ and our experience of oneness. It's just like the two types of abiding in Christ. All believers abide in Christ. That's an unchangeable fact. But we also have to actively abide in him, to develop habits and desires to obey and spend time with Christ. The same is true of holiness. We are made holy by the righteousness of Christ. Positionally, we are made holy but experientially, we are becoming holy—or at least we should be.



The same is true of oneness. We are in complete unity with all believers. That is a spiritual fact. We have a new family. Our unity with other believers is just as certain as our unity with Christ. The two are inseparable. But tell me. Do you feel completely unified with all believers? Do you live in harmony with all believers? Are you free of all conflict and strife with every believer? We know that our experience does not live up to the spiritual reality of our unity in Christ. The difference between our experiential oneness and our actual oneness is where we need to be eager—to make every effort.

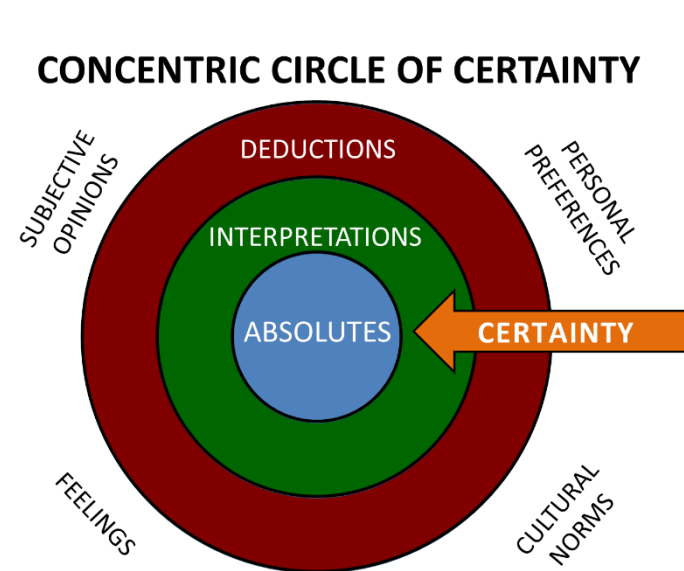
Paul said we are to maintain the unity of the spirit. But if we are not actually unified, in what sense are we maintaining it? The word maintain does not mean keep it at the same level. It means to watch it and protect it. It means to be engaged in developing and keeping it as a present reality.

This is not just a “let’s be nice to each other” message. Our unity is fundamental to the proclamation of the gospel. This is founded in the work of Christ.

*14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (Ephesians 2:14-16).*

If Christ has reconciled us to the Father, with whom we were once enemies, then does it not follow that we should be reconciled with fellow believers? Our unity with them should be visible and evident to all. And our disunity is evidence against the reconciling work of the Father.

So the question is, what does this look like? What does it mean personally to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit? First of all, unity is not unity at all costs because truth is inherently divisive. If someone is outside of our doctrinal fence—if they are not united to us in one faith, one Lord, on baptism, etc, then we are not united to them. They are outside of orthodox belief. Within the realm of orthodox belief, we have unity. Outside of that, we do not have unity.

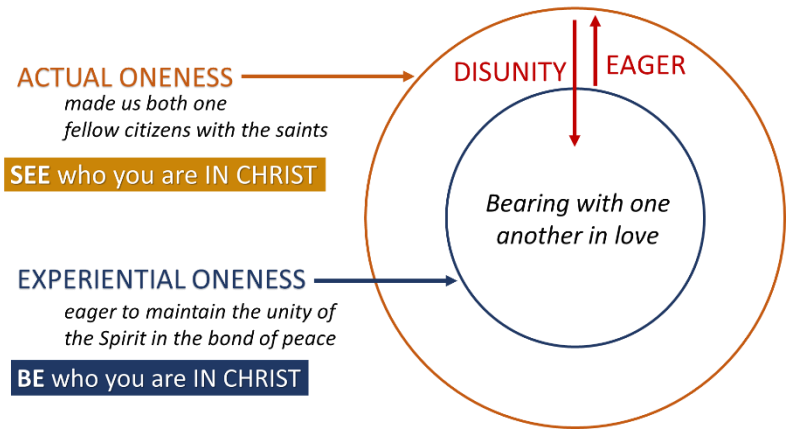


It’s time to resurrect my concentric circle of certainty. This has helped me so much over the years so I trust that it is likewise helpful to you. It helps us determine our absolute core beliefs. I call these our to die for beliefs because they are so central and we hold them with such certainty that we would be willing to die for them. We must be united on these core beliefs. If we do not share them, then we cannot have unity in the Spirit. We can be friends with anyone. We can work on community projects and very important tasks together, but we are not united in the Spirit unless we are united in our core beliefs.

Beyond that, we don’t have to believe what everyone else believes. If you recall from last week, this was what tripped up Dave Hart for decades. Their fellowship demanded unity, not only on core beliefs, but on things that should have been in the periphery. The larger your center circle of

absolutes, the less unity you have with others. Do you see what I mean? If we have to agree on a handful of absolutes, then many more people are united in those beliefs. But if your list of core beliefs is a mile long, then very few people will hold to everyone of those beliefs. So the most important decision you can make is which beliefs should be in the center. For example, at least in theory, I am willing to die for the deity of Christ and the necessity of faith in Christ alone for salvation. If you take that away, you have nothing left. But I am not willing to die over my belief in the end times. Jesus is coming back. That is a core belief but when he is returning is not a core belief. I can be certain of the former but not the latter. That would be in the realm of interpretation or personal opinions. But if you shrink your core beliefs too much, you end up with nothing. You end up saying that all paths lead to God or no god at all.

But here's the thing. If you have as many believers as possible united in the center, the hard part is that you all hold an endless variety of opinions about which you do not agree. That in itself is a recipe for tension and conflict. It's easy to get along when everyone agrees on everything but the less agreement you have, the harder it is to get along with one another, let alone, have unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace. There are countless factors of disunity constantly working against our unity, and most of them are our own sin and pride.



But there is a simple antidote to this battle tucked away in verse two—bearing with one another in love. When we are able to do this, we are eager to maintain unity of the Spirit. But it's hard work. That's why the word bearing is in the verse. Do you know what this word means in Greek? Here's a shocker—it means to bear. It means to endure and to suffer. Do you see, God knows that working for unity can be really tough at times.



It looks a bit like this photo of our two pets. Frannie wants to be friends with Fernando but the cat won't be happy until the dog is dead. They may never be best buddies, but the solution is to bear with one another in love.

So it is with us. Unity is hard work. It requires bearing with one another. There will be some suffering and endurance involved. Now I am oversimplifying

bearing with one another just a bit. It's more complicated than this. There is also repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and more. Paul will get to all of those topics in the next three chapters. Those are all vital parts of the process but the first step will always be your willingness

to bear with other believers. What is getting in the way of unity between you and another brother or sister in Christ? Are you willing to bear the Lord for their sake and for the sake of the gospel?

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