



## **Living in Unity (1 Peter 3:8-12)**

Unity is a powerful force, especially in ministry. Jesus prayed for His disciples, *"I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."* (John 17:22-24)

Unity is one of those elusive qualities that empower teams and organizations to function with maximum effectiveness. One of the key reasons Palm Valley Church is able to grow and adapt so quickly, is the tremendous unity that exists in the congregation, staff, and board.

This is no accident. Unity in the church is not some mystical ecumenical concept, it is the result of Christian people coming together, willing to humble themselves, and put God's work ahead of their own agendas. Unity is God's desire for His church. In our scripture today, Peter calls all believers to be of one mind. He does not give a set of rules to follow, but presents a profile of qualities which promote unity, and distinguish the follower of Christ. This is the kind of virtuous Christian that God calls us to be.

The church is able to function as a dynamic, influential community when individuals, who are born again and submitted to the Holy Spirit, set aside selfish interests and proactively practice love, truth, sympathy, compassion, and humility toward each other. Christians of such character will naturally promote unity and become a catalyst for real progress in the church and the cause of Christ.

As we all know, Christian unity will come under fire. If we pick at each other, nothing of eternal value gets done. Pride, condescension, lack of love, and hard hearts among God's people can stifle and even paralyze the work of any local church. Much is at stake, so each of us must work for peace and strive to protect our Christian unity. This unity is not for a denomination, or a political strategy, or petty controversial issues, but for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the community of believers.

Unity begins with you! *Will you do your part and pray for others to do theirs?* If you are tempted to gossip, spread rumors, unnecessarily criticize a ministry or cause dissension, take a deep breath, and ask God to give you a humble mind and real clarity. God may very well use the opportunity to work in your own heart. Even if you are insulted or criticized by others, don't retaliate, pay people back with a blessing and God will bless you.

God is going to build his church and we can either build it with him, or watch others build it while we complain and comment from the sidelines. *Will you choose to work for unity or for your agenda?* God has called us to unity and no personal agenda is greater than that.

-DJS