



A People Who Live in Unity

(Romans 15:5-6, 13)

“What was the mightiest miracle of the New Testament church? Unity. This church loved each other, and this is what set it apart as an amazing display of God’s grace to the world.”

- Max Lucado

We began this series with thoughts on unity and now we’re ready to land there. If you have played a musical instrument in a group, you know the necessity of tuning those instruments... together. You will never make beautiful music if you start trying to tune to one another, individually! The only way to move forward into lovely music is to all tune to the one, perfect pitch. For a symphony orchestra, that is an A 440 (referring to a frequency of 440 Hz).

Read Together

Romans (15:5-6, 13 NIV)

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Unity does not come when we seek it; rather, it is a by product of seeking to follow Christ.”

- Tim Keller

Explore Together

1. Godly Endurance and Encouragement (15:5) These words endurance and encouragement may seem to be an odd way to begin a prayer that will focus on unity. But if we back up just one verse, we see the link. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." (15:4)

Discuss: Why is it so important that our hope is anchored in the Word of God and in God Himself? In what ways does the Bible teach us endurance and provide encouragement?

2. United Minds (15:5-6) When we consider some of what Paul has taught in the preceding chapters, Bible scholars tend to agree that this is not a prayer for agreement on everything. But it is a prayer for agreement on what matters most - unity in Christ Jesus. As John Stott says, “The more we agree with him and about him, the more we will agree with one another.”



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Discuss: Practically speaking, how does our unity around the person and work of Jesus Christ diminish (or at least dim) our differences of opinions and tastes? Share some experiences you have had in which you developed deep love for people who were quite different to you.

3. United Worship (15:6) Scholars indicate that “one voice” refers to corporate worship, since that is the only setting in which all voices are joined together. John Stott adds to his thoughts that we read earlier: “Without this unity of mind about Christ unity of voice in worship is impossible.” And Timothy Keller states, “The ‘so that’ here shows that God gives spiritual unity in order that we can worship together; our seeking to do so will enhance unity.”

Discuss: Though it is difficult to find words that adequately express it, describe this kind of unity that occurs when we are gathered in worship. If possible, pause the conversation for a few minutes of precious worship as a Connect. Though it is tough to describe, we can probably agree that it points to the mystery of the Spirit’s work amongst God’s people, unifying us around Jesus.

4. Overflowing Hope (15:13) Consider these key words hope, joy, peace, and trust. Notice that our hope comes from the God of hope. This is not hope that we try to manufacture within ourselves. Notice, also, that our joy and peace come from God as we trust in Him. The little word that is translated “in” is a preposition of position - our trust is positioned IN Him. We are positioned IN Him. The Message reads beautifully, Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope. The Greek verb translated “fill” is well represented here; it is a fulfilling, a to the brim filling!

Discuss: What a rich verse! Discuss each of those key words. Which words involve our effort, and which involve God’s power? Spend a good length of time in prayer, together, as you celebrate our God of hope Who invites us to live overflowing lives of hope by the power of His Spirit!

Going Deeper

- Consider memorising one or more of the prayers we have studied in this series. And then commit to pray those prayers in the coming months and years - for your families and friends, your campus family, our greater church family, and for the “big C” Church in your city and across this globe!
- Study other prayers of Paul for churches he shepherded, found in: Romans 1, Ephesians 1, Colossians 1, 1 Thessalonians 1, 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 Thessalonians 1, 2 Thessalonians 2.



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Pray Together

May the God of hope fill our hearts with all joy and peace as we trust in Him, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. May we be known as a people who are unified in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King, to the glory and praise of God.

Amen.

Suggested Resources

- **Book: D.A. Carson** - Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation
- **Book: Tyler Staton** - Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools
- **Book: C.H. Spurgeon** - Lessons from the Apostle Paul's Prayers
- **Podcast: The Bible Project** - N.T. Wright Interview: Getting to Know the Apostle Paul

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series-gospel-p9-acts-e5-nt-wright-interview-getting-know-apostle-paul/>