

When the Church Is the Church

A group of highly successful tomato growers in central California had one problem. That was getting their tomatoes distributed across the country without having them bruised. They developed machines to pick the tomatoes whole while they were still yellow and firm. Then they passed them on an assembly belt under a certain kind of light for seven seconds, turning them red. They devised a package so strong that it was nearly impossible to bruise the tomatoes even if dropped.

However, they discovered a new problem. The tomatoes didn't taste the way tomatoes are supposed to taste!

If you are looking for a perfect church, then keep looking. We are some blemished and bruised tomatoes around here. Sometimes one of us even goes bad. But, we are genuine, not artificially enhanced. Sometimes, even often, we get it right. When we do, it tastes delicious. We have a wonderfully imperfect church family.

Acts 2:1-4, 17-21, 37-41

Pentecostal

- Are you Pentecostal?
- Are we Pentecostal?
- If a church is alive in the world it is Pentecostal.
- If lives are being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, then the church is Pentecostal.
- How do we keep this aliveness, the fire burning, this Spirit moving? Two things must be in existence.

1) One Accord

- Pentecost became the primal fact of church history. They received Holy Spirit power.
- That power came when they were in One Accord
- One Accord = one passion, harmony, unity, agreement
- On what can we all agree? What will unite us and bring us into harmony?
- In order to come into unity we must strip down what we emphasize to the purest and most essential beliefs of our faith. We must find our **Single Purpose**.
- **Mark 12:28-31**
 - Love God passionately
 - Love people genuinely
 - **Our single purpose is to glorify God and to edify others.**
 - Love is the trump card. Love always wins. There exists nothing more important or more powerful than love.
- Harmony does not mean that we all think alike. We can and will disagree on many lesser important issues.
- At an Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church several hundred attendees observed two preachers debating a knotty issue during one of the sessions. The debate waged hot and heavy, with each man excoriating the other as to his perspective, judgment and common sense. Later, the two men were seen together at lunch, laughing uproariously with their arms around each other. Someone

said, "That's a switch. About an hour ago I thought you two were going to start a fist fight." Their laughter shook the entire room, and one said, "Harold and I don't agree on anything much except the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So, we can disagree on everything and still be brothers in Christ together!"

- Missionary E. Stanley Jones often said, "Everyone who belongs to Christ belongs to everyone who belongs to Christ."

2) Prayer

- **Acts 1:14**
- A remarkable Methodist pastor, Arthur J. Moore, led some of the largest churches in the South during the first half of the 1900s. Over a period of several years at least one person was genuinely converted to Christ every Sunday. One of Moore's best friends asked him about his success. He replied, "Come with me." He took his friend to the basement, where a prayer meeting was in progress. About 70 men were fervently praying for their pastor and for the worship service that was about to begin. When they finished they quietly walked up the stair into the service. Moore asked his friend, "Did you notice where they sat?" His friend replied, "What do you mean? They are scattered all over the congregation." "Yes, thank God," Moore replied, "And where each one sits down, he's such a center of divine warmth that anyone frozen in sin who sits near him is liable to thaw out before the service is over."
Arthur Moore knew that prayer was the source of power for his church.
- I am calling every Disciple Group to spend time in every meeting praying for me and the other pastors. I am asking you to pray for our worship services that in every service people would be genuinely converted, healed, set free and made whole. I am asking that our entire church family to pray before every service that lives be transformed continually.
- I am challenging everyone to examine his or her heart to see if God is calling you to pray on Sunday morning in the sanctuary from about 9:50-10:10. Who hears the voice of Holy Spirit calling you to prayer?

Conclusion

- Unity and Prayer are the keys to God's power being manifest in our church.
- Live every day to glorify God and to edify others with your words and deeds.
- Join all of our church family in 21 days of fasting and prayer January 4-24.
 - *Write down a plan and make a verbal commitment to the Lord*
 - Full fast--liquids only
 - Daniel fast--no meat, sweets or bread; juice, fruit, vegetables & nuts
 - Partial fast--from sunup to sundown; abstain from certain food or drink; give up one meal every day
 - May want to begin with a 1-3 day full fast, then continue with a Daniel or partial fast?
 - Make a decision and stick with it.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Discussion Guide

Primary Text: Ephesians 4:1-6

In Matthew 12:25, Jesus said, ""Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand."

The purpose of God according to Holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Eph. 1). The Church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the church to live as sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the Church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom. The calling of the Church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, and culture, and to bring all people into communion with God.

Questions:

What are some of the biggest issues that get in the way of Church unity?

Why do we tend to focus on our differences rather than our similarities?