

Being Like-Minded

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The Bible describes the process by which God sought to unite the human family to Himself through the Messiah and by the Spirit. In spite of the diversity in the world, everyone can become united with the Creator. Once united with God in His family, the Church, we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

In fact, God's family being united through love weighed heavily on the heart of Jesus in His last days. Jesus prayed, "*O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them*" (John 17:25-26). Love was and remains the only path to unity. To accomplish unity, the family of God is instructed to be like-minded.

There are often misconceptions about the Biblical meaning of like-mindedness. Mainly, some seem to think that being like-minded means everyone thinking the same thing at the same time. This is not what like-minded means.

In his letter to the saints at Philippi, Paul instructed them to be like-minded. The saints at Philippi came from diverse backgrounds (Acts 16). The first Christians in the city were a group of women. Paul found them worshipping outside the city-limits. After preaching to them, Lydia and her household were baptized. After a series of amazing events, Paul and Silas preached the Gospel to a Roman soldier and his household. They were also baptized.

Before becoming united into the family of God, what did Lydia and this Roman soldier have in common? Little to nothing. Lydia was a worshipper of God. Paul found her worshipping outside the city limits most likely because what she was doing was not welcomed or legal inside the city limits. The Roman soldier was a pagan. These two likely would have avoided and disdained one another; yet, they were now brothers and sisters. How could they ever be like-minded?

Achieving Like-mindedness

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:1-5).

Like-mindedness is explained by Paul in the above cited text. First, Paul notes a series of blessings we have been given to help us become united. These blessings are perfectly equipped to guide us in our efforts of unity. Briefly consider these blessings.

1. Consolation in Christ: As an infant, Jesus was brought to Jerusalem to be dedicated. There was an old priest, Simeon, who was said to have been waiting for the "*consolation of Israel*" (Luke 2:25). Upon laying his weary eyes on the Messiah, he said, "*Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared*

in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

Simeon had been waiting his entire life to see the Messiah. Simeon's life was not wasted. He was blessed with the consolation in knowing the Messiah had been born. Likewise, the brokenhearted can find solace, relief, and support in Christ.

2. Comfort of love: Being in Christ is comfortable and encouraging. The love of Christ is enlightening and warm. As our lives are often made difficult through unloving and selfish acts, we can find comfort in Christ's love.

3. Fellowship with the Spirit: Through obedience to the Gospel, we are given a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells in us and communicates our needs to God (Rom. 8).

4. Bowels and mercies: There is great compassion in Christ. He promises to never forsake us. We can always find compassion and understanding in our Savior.

In summary, with these blessings we can become like-minded. But what does like-minded mean? Well, in the following statements in verse two, Paul explains how we can be like-minded. Paul establishes three concepts which can shape our thinking. Consider the following.

1. Same love: We are to share the same motive. Love is the only proper motivation for our faith (1 Cor 13). Love is the only motive by which we are to engage with each other and the world.

2. One accord: We are to share the same purpose. Our purpose in coming together in a congregation is to glorify God. Together, we can help each other bring glory to God. If we attempt to advance ourselves in God's family, we will disrupt unity.

3. One mind: We are to share the same resolve. Sharing the same motive and purpose will help create a single-minded determination to glorify God, teach the Gospel, and help each other get to Heaven. We need a strong resolve in the face of our adversary, the devil.

What's the Point?

In this passage, Paul establishes rather broad parameters for becoming like-minded. Motive, purpose, and resolve are ideals which can be shared by everyone who seeks their salvation in Jesus. These are non-negotiable. There is no toleration for saints who use the local church as a means to exert self-serving agendas. At the same time, however, these unifying concepts of being like-minded create space for diversity.

For example, congregations typically are comprised of a diverse membership. This was certainly true of the church at Philippi. Today, saints continue to come from many different walks of life. Some saints come from denominational backgrounds. Some were raised by parents who were Christians. Some came from non-religious backgrounds.

Aside from backgrounds, consider the present status of church members. Some saints are older in the faith. Some saints are new in the faith. Some saints have great-grandchildren. Some saints are just starting to raise a family. Some saints do not have children. Some saints are unmarried. Some saints are rich. Some saints struggle to make ends meet. Yet, we all can be like-minded in our motive,

purpose, and resolve.

Conclusion

There is no way possible for such diverse church memberships to reach a point in which every member thinks the same thing at the same time. However, all members can share the same motive, purpose, and resolve. Background or present condition does not determine these ideals. If we can be united in this kind of thinking, we will create relationships whereby we can grow together in the image of Christ.

When someone who has reached a particular conclusion after years of study and experience tries to impose his or her conclusion on others who have not had the same opportunity of time, study, and experience, division is likely to occur. Imposing personal judgments on others is not the process by which we become like-minded.

Unfortunately, this is how some approach becoming like-minded. If someone does not think like me, there is a problem. This is the process by which authority is usurped and factionalism is produced. Being of the same love, one accord, and one mind will produce patience, understanding, and prevent self-exaltation. Such attitudes will help us grow together in Christ and fulfill His desire for us to be one.

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