

## **I. God's Heart Regarding Unity and Disunity**

**Romans 15:5-7** Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

**Romans 16:17-18** Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

## **II. Prejudice Addressed in the New Testament**

### A. Jesus & the Woman at the Well

**John 4:9** Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

### B. A Samaritan Village Rejects Jesus

**Luke 9:51 - 56** Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" 54 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

### C. Peter in Antioch

**Galatians 2:11-14** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

### D. The Book of Romans

1. Rome had expelled all Jews for about 5 years under Claudius Caesar (Acts 18:2). By the time Paul wrote the book of Romans, around A.D. 57, they Jews had returned and the Jewish Christians had been restored to the church in Rome. (Rom 16:3).

2. The Roman house churches, which had consisted completely of Gentile believers for at least five years, now faced conflict with some of the Jewish believers who had been at odds with Rome for decades.

3. One of the key reasons for Paul writing Romans, a church he had yet to visit, was to bring unity to the two groups.

On another note... Peter gets the angel in Acts 10, goes to Cornelius' house and has an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Explains it all in Jerusalem to the brothers, and then folds to bias against the Gentiles in front of the Jews in Antioch as Paul reports in Gal 2...

### **III. The Nature of Injustice**

A. Wherever injustice exists in the earth it's the exact opposite of the nature of God. His throne is established on righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14). When Jesus returns one of the key things He is going to release on the earth, which will flow from the throne, is justice throughout every nation (Isa 42:1).

B. Throughout the Bible, human injustice is continually rebuked and judged by God. He is consistent in His repudiation of injustice in every form in every place (Lev. 19:15, Isa 1:17, Isa 59:8-15, Jer 22:3, Jer 22:13, Amos 5:7-24).

C. In light of His nature we must also understand that the greatest injustice man perpetrates is not injustice against one another, its injustice perpetrated against God.

1. The cross is the greatest single act of injustice the earth has ever seen; the perfect, spotless, Son of God being defamed, mistreated, tortured, and put to death at the hands of humans whom He created.

2. The continuation of this injustice is manifest throughout the earth to this day. The greatest injustice is that the Son of God is not worshipped throughout the nations of the earth. Every other injustice pails in comparison to this one.

3. For us to understand injustice rightly we must understand injustice from heaven's perspective. The truth is that the injustices we inflict upon one another are ultimately acts of injustice against God.

4. God promises to bring retribution on every form of injustice. He is committed to releasing justice in the earth. Justice is an attribute of His nature. He will not relent until justice is served throughout the nations. He is going to make all the wrong things right.

#### **IV. The Nature of Unity**

A. Unity is not uniformity or conformity, it's harmony. It's diverse parts coming together in a way that actually enriches each of the differences while corporately enhancing the whole. Ultimately together the sum is better than any of the parts. This is the destiny of the body of Christ - to be a glorious expression of unity in diversity.

B. Unity is a product of relationship. It's not primarily a product of revelation. In other words, we can hear a message on unity, feel the Holy Spirit's conviction and illumination, but the revelation of the Holy Spirit alone does not create unity. Unity comes from intentionally seeking it out, it doesn't happen inevitably. The truth is disunity is inevitable if we don't intentionally develop relationships and move towards unity.

C. Once there is deep friendship that is formed, that is where divine ideas are formed. It's from that place that we will love and protect one another. We can't only agree that we are brothers and sisters legally in the gospel, we must actually live that out and then our kinship in Christ will be real.

#### **V. Steps to Intentionality**

A. Acknowledge – we must acknowledge that there is still a legitimate problem around race issues today

1. Prejudice and racism still exists and impacts us individually and corporately.
2. The effects of historic systemic racism still impact our country today.
3. The problem is likely not just “out there somewhere” but likely exists in our own hearts to some level.

B. Understand – As believers we must understand the issues as best we can

1. There are multiple narratives that are at all times trying to sway our opinion on this issue. Many voices are speaking, but not much truth is prevailing.
2. We all tend to view race issues through our own set of experiences and our own culture.
3. Each person has a story. Each story is important. You cannot know a person without knowing their story.

C. Empathize – Stepping alongside another in the emotion they are feeling and feeling that emotion with them.

1. Mourning with those who mourn and mourning over injustice is something that is biblically required of believers (Romans 12:15, Ezekiel 9:4)

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2. From those who have suffered injustice, empathy looks like mercy.
  3. From those who have not suffered injustice, empathy looks like compassion.
- D. Act – Love must be in deed and in truth and not merely in words (1 John 3:18)
1. Be intentional to engage in relationships, do not simply tolerate or ignore.
  2. Seek to understand. Listen to people's stories.
  3. When there is opportunity, overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21)