



Today, we launch a new year, and I want to share with you four talks that I hope opens my heart to you. I want to share with you my deepest desire for our congregation. I want you to know that I pray over you regularly. My most frequent pray for you is "Lord, make us one." Today, let me share with you why this prayer is central to what I pray for us.

A CRISIS OF UNITY

1 Corinthians 1:10-17, I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul...Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (NIV)

What unity is not: (1) **Union**

(2) **Uniformity**

(3) **Unanimity**

Two Key phrases of unity:

1. "Agree with one another"

Speak the same language -- A common language of heart, purpose and essential belief

2. "Perfectly united"

Knit together -- to do the work of restoration

Philippians 2:2, Make me very happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and having one mind and purpose. (NCV)

We have to **strive** for unity. We must **work** to protect it.

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 2:2-6, Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. (NCV)

UNITY BLESSES "THE HOUSE"

Psalms 133:1-3, How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. (NIV)

The House is blessed with **anointing**. (oil)

The House is blessed with **refreshing**. (dew)

The House is blessed with **life**. (blessing)

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF UNITY

John 17:21-23, Father, I pray that they can be one. As you are in me and I am in you, I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world will believe that you sent me. I have given these people the glory that you gave me so that they can be one, just as you and I are one. I will be in them and you will be in me so that they will be completely one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you loved them just as much as you loved me.

The ultimate apologetic of the Gospel is **observable love** among believers who live in agreement on the important issues.

Striving for the unity of the Spirit means keeping the **cross** and the **Gospel** before us in all the ebb and flow of church life.

*1 Corinthians 1:17, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the **Gospel**—not with words of human wisdom, **lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.***