

## FELLOWSHIP

### Francis Chan

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. **Acts 2:42–47***

**09:50 --**

“It’s like stepping into a whole new world, because now you’ve got a mission. But what is that mission?”

- Do you live your life on a mission?
- What is your mission?
- How does your mission affect the way you live?

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **Matthew 28:18–20***

- What is a “disciple?”
- Are you making disciples in every nation?
- Are you making any disciples?
- How can you make disciples of Jesus?

“As I read in the Scriptures, I realized God doesn’t want me to do this by myself. He doesn’t want me just to follow Him on my own. That’s why He created church. The church. He says, ‘Now you’re part of a group of people. You don’t do this by yourself.’”

- How do you see the church?
- Is your view of the church based on a biblical understanding of church or is it based on something else?
- What is that something else?

“If Jesus was on the earth right now, and you asked Jesus, ‘Hey, where’s the church?’ He’s not going to give you an address or point to a building. He would explain, ‘No, the church ... those are the people on this planet who fear Me, who follow Me, and are filled with the Spirit.’”

- How would you explain the church to someone who has no knowledge of Christianity?

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. **Acts 4:32–35***

“There was this sense of mission together. This is what He meant by ‘fellowship.’ That’s a lot different from a potluck. It’s this idea that we’re one now, we’re family.”

- Do you feel like you’re part of a family when you’re with other Christians?
- What does it feel like when you gather with other Christians?

“They’re having a fellowship and a sharing that we don’t see in the church of Jesus Christ. And yet, that’s the very thing that Jesus wanted for us.”

- Where in the world today do you see fellowship and sharing as Jesus intended for His church?
- How is the church missing the mark?

“I can tell you, Jesus forgives you, Jesus forgives you, Jesus is forgiving. But that’s not enough. God says, ‘I want you to show Jesus to the world.’ So that means I need my brothers and sisters around me, and we offend one another, but we keep forgiving. And then suddenly the world looks on and goes, ‘I’ve never seen that before.’”

- How can you show Jesus to other people?
- When was the last time other people were able to see Jesus through you?
- Were other Christians involved? How?
- What kind of impact should our fellowship have on the world?

*[Jesus prayed to His Father,] “I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” **John 17:23***

- If this is what Jesus intended for His church, why do we see so much disunity within the church?

“There’s something about our unity that makes the message believable.”

- How can our unity as followers of Christ make His message believable to a skeptical world?

“I am far more comfortable doing this by myself ... let me just have my own relationship with God.”

- Have you said or thought those words?
- Are there times you wish you could just go it alone?

- How has our culture influenced the way we think about this?
- What do you think God would say about that?

“But God says, ‘That’s not what I designed you for. Here’s the mission ... I need you to show Jesus to the world by the way that you interact with one another and love one another.’”

- What do you believe God designed YOU for?
- How can you live out this mission to show Jesus to the world?

**10:00 --**

“If you fear God, and you’ve decided to follow Jesus with your life, and you really have His Spirit in you, then you’re my brother, you’re my sister. In God’s eyes, He sees us like a family, and He wants us to live that way. And that’s what fellowship is.”

- How does this match up with how you have typically seen fellowship in the past?
- Do you want that kind of fellowship in your life?
- What can you do to experience the kind of fellowship God designed you for?

*But you are not to be called “Rabbi,” for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers.*  
**Matthew 23:8**

*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.* **1 Corinthians 1:10**

- **Unity/Uniformity – See article from Blake Coffee, attached.**
- **From Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary:**
  - **United -- involving people or groups working together to achieve something; made up of members who share the same purpose, interest, etc.**
  - **Uniformity -- the quality or state of being the same : the quality or state of being uniform or identical**
- **UNITED States of America... ?**

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.... But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.* **1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 24–26**

*Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. **2 Corinthians 13:11***

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **Ephesians 4:2–3***

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel. **Philippians 1:27***

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **Philippians 2:1–4***

*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. **Romans 15:5–6***

# Unity and Uniformity...Two Very Different Things

28122009

*Tuesday Re-mix – This is a popular post from last year, updated and resubmitted for your consideration and comments.*

Biblical unity is not about agreeing with each other all the time. In fact, the more I read about the New Testament church in Paul's letters, the more I see that disagreement played a fairly significant role in the early church and I believe it still does today. There has always been disagreement in the church. As long as we "see as in a mirror, dimly", there will be disagreement in the church. That disagreement grows us, stretches us, humbles us, and keeps us accountable. It is a positive thing. It is not something to be feared.



In that sense, the diversity in the church may well be one of our true strengths. Our ability (or inability) to embrace and manage that diversity will either grow us and move us forward or it will end us (locally, I mean, not globally...not even the gates of hell will prevail against the church globally). Biblical unity assumes there will be disagreement and insists that we find healthy ways of processing it. It assumes you and I are living in relationships where your understanding of God actually informs, shapes, and (gulp!) *changes* my understanding of God. We live so as to be intentionally influenced by

one another, especially by our differences.

Yes, scripture calls us to be "like-minded" and yes, there is a place for doctrinal purity and truth and a clear sense of right and wrong. **Unity doesn't compromise the truth.** It just calls us to a level of humility in our grasp of truth, a healthy understanding of what it means to "see as in a mirror, dimly".

**But despite the value of doctrinal purity and truth, in talking about the church, nowhere does God's Word call us to uniformity. Nowhere.**

Uniformity is the place we tend to run toward out of our fear of diversity. Being essentially a "tribal" people (see [this post](#) about the barrier-free church) we lean towards pushing diversity away, because it scares us. The urban dictionary calls it "[otherizing](#)" people. We set them apart from us and mark them as different from us. It is, I believe, usually about fear. But that fear doesn't come from God. He did not give us a spirit of fear. Unity is quite the opposite of that fear. Unity means we embrace our differences and show the world that the love of Christ is much, much larger than these differences.

So as we begin this or any other discussion about Biblical unity, let us begin with this precept: it is not about agreeing all the time...it is not uniformity. It is not even close.

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Thoughts from Alexander Campbell:

*Whenever the history of this effort at reformation shall have been faithfully written, it will appear, we think, bright as the sun, that our career has been marked with a spirit of forbearance, moderation, and love of union with an unequivocal desire for preserving the integrity, harmony, and co-operation of all who teach one faith, one Lord, and one immersion. In confirmation of this fact I am happy to add that no Baptist of good character for piety and morality, has ever been, because of a diverse theory or opinion, excluded from our communion or communities. . . . We, as a denomination, are as desirous as ever to unite and co-operate with all Christians on the broad and vital principles of the New and everlasting Covenant.* Alexander Campbell, "The Editor's Response to Mr. Broaddus," *Millennial Harbinger*, New Series, 4, no. XII (December 1840): 556.