

TEXT Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 2:1-4

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:22

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain what unity is and why it is necessary. They should recognize that unity between believers is vital in the work of the Lord. Unity implies the oneness of the spirit, aims, interests, and feelings of diverse individuals, and is necessary in order to receive God’s blessing and to see much accomplished for Christ.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! — Psalm 133:1

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. — 1 Peter 3:8

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

Sticking Together

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Unity Among Believers

REFERENCE INFORMATION

The word *unity* comes from the Hebrew word *yâhadh*, meaning “unitedness,” or the Greek, *henótes*, which means “oneness.” It is used in the Old Testament in the sense of togetherness of persons (Genesis 13:6), fellowship (Judges 19:6), and praise (Psalm 34:3). The New Testament word bespeaks the unity of faith that binds together the people of God (Ephesians 4:13).

It is apparent that from the beginning God wanted unity with His creation. Satan destroyed that fellowship, and has consistently worked to cause disunity between God and mankind ever since. Satan will permit unity if it is

against God, as happened when the children of men attempted to build the tower of Babel. The Lord himself came down and stopped that effort. The Mosaic Law has many ordinances that govern man’s relationship with his fellowman and it is summed up in Leviticus 19:18, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.” Jesus stressed the need for oneness when He prayed to His Father in chapter 17 of John. He asked the Father that there would be unity between the disciples, that they might be one with the Godhead, and also that those who believed through their preaching would be one.

YOUR OPENER

Unity Among Believers

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RESPONSES

1. Let the students give their illustrations of unity in action. They will see that working in unity does, indeed, bring positive results. Bring out that this is especially true in spiritual endeavors. You could use the Biblical examples of Peter and John in Acts 3:1-11, or Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25-34.

2. Compassion — to feel deep sympathy with an urge to help
Edifying — to instruct and improve, especially by good example
Endeavoring — to strive, aim, or try
Forbearance — patience, longsuffering
Discuss with your students how each of these words might pertain to unity.

3. This question will require some introspective thinking on the part of your students. You will not wish to make them uncomfortable by requiring verbal answers, but it should provide an opportunity to discuss how forbearance relates to unity. It may be easier to give an example of how we must forbear others. However, this question should illustrate how forbearance is our responsibility as we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.

4. Allow time for your students to offer their examples. A physical impairment of the foot can destroy the unity that exists between the brain and the foot. The brain may signal the foot to walk, but an impaired foot cannot properly respond. Just so, it is important for every member of the Body of Christ to fit perfectly, according to the plan of the Head of the Body, if the desired results are to be obtained.

In this lesson we discuss the relationship between the members of the Body of Christ. Good relationships begin with individuals following Jesus first and then submitting to the authority of the ministry as discussed in previous lessons. When we put into practice the admonition given in our key verse, the end result is unity—oneness of spirit, aims, interests, and feelings among individuals. When this is present, we will receive God's blessing and see much accomplished for the Lord.

1. Give an example, Biblical or otherwise, where two or more worked in unity and achieved positive results.

2. Define the following words as used in our key verse and text:

Compassion
Edifying
Endeavoring
Forbearance

3. We are told in Ephesians 4:2 to forbear one another in love. Give an example of how someone might need to forbear (endure or tolerate) you.

4. Give an example of the coordination, or unity, that exists within your physical body. Then discuss the result of a breakdown in this unity, such as a physical ailment. Finally, explain what Ephesians 4:15,16 means to you.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. Adam Clarke explains the phrase, *in one accord*, in this way: "It signifies that all their minds, affections, desires, and wishes, were concentrated in one object, every man having the same end in view; and, having but one desire, they had but one prayer to God, and every heart uttered it." What are the advantages of the spiritual Body of Christ being in one accord?

6. What is the difference between Christian unity and the unity in worldly organizations such as unions and political parties? With this thought in mind, what kind of statement can be made regarding the importance of maintaining Christian unity?

7. In the space of thirteen verses in John 17 (verses 11-23), the need for oneness is mentioned four times. What conclusion can we draw from this passage of Scripture?

8. Name five of the spiritual roles recorded in our text that Christ gave to men, and explain why He gave them.

9. How is it possible to have spiritual unity among individuals with diverse personalities, backgrounds, and preferences?

10. If a person finds himself in a situation where his unity with another is being threatened, what should he do?

5. As your students discuss this question, they will no doubt bring out the fact that there is great strength in unity, or being of one accord. The work of the Gospel can proceed unhindered if there are no internal differences, even though it may come under attack from the enemy. The full measure of energy and zeal can be directed to the spread of the Gospel, rather than expending itself on repairing or reconciling differences between members.

6. Let students offer their thoughts regarding the first question. They should be directed to understand that Christian unity is sealed by a spiritual bond made possible by a common faith in God and a yielding to His leadership. Other kinds of unity lack that bond and therefore have difficulty in sticking together to achieve positive results. In answer to the second question, your students should conclude that if Christian unity is lacking among a group of "believers," they become no different than any other secular organization.

7. As your students discuss this, they should conclude that if our Savior felt the importance to such an extent that He prayed so very earnestly regarding it, we must not consider it an optional or unimportant matter. Unity is a condition present in the true Body of Christ.

8. The roles mentioned were those of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. These were given for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Your discussion should lead to the conclusion that in these verses the leadership roles are accorded to some. (You may wish to use the verses to tie back to our lesson of the past Sunday concerning the ministry.) Then direct your students' attention to the fact that there are varied offices, as well as varied individuals, but verse 13 brings out that everyone is directed toward the unity of the faith.

9. Your students should conclude that it is only possible when all are motivated by the same spiritual goals. There may be differences, and even though these differences may not be doctrinal, they are the reasons for endeavoring to keep the unity. As we put Christ first and come under His authority we will prefer our brother.

10. Direct the discussion to positive ways of dealing with the situation. One of the first will be with prayer. Refer your students to Matthew 18:15-17, and discuss the steps outlined here, emphasizing the importance of the sequence. Your students should realize such problems are the work of the devil, and that they should determine to combat them as strongly as any other of the wiles he may use.

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YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What does *unity* mean? Give an example of unity.

Why does the Bible tell us to have unity? Of what value is it?

What must we do to have unity?

Do you think every person is responsible for striving to keep unity? How?

What makes a church or a home run smoothly?

As we work together we must all have the same goal and the same purpose. What might that goal/purpose be?

According to Ephesians 4:11-16, what is the result when we do work together in unity?

How does sanctification promote unity?

In the ANSWER story, Toby made a bad decision. What was it?

How did Toby's independent spirit affect those he was hiking with?

THINGS TO DO

Show your students a puzzle, illustrating that many pieces put together make one complete picture.

Have students try to do two things at once. For example: Write name with one hand and tie shoelace with the other. Walk in two directions at once. (Point: We all work together for one purpose.)

Bring a watch, radio, or some item which has many parts. Show how removing even one part affects its operation.

Bring to class a picture made from various grains, seeds, peas, beans, etc. Bring also a small amount of the as-sorted, loose grains. The picture can represent the

Church or the Body of Christ. Individually, one pea, bean, or grain of rice doesn't make much of an impression, but together they can make a beautiful picture. Unity with Christ and other believers is also beautiful.

In large bold letters, write the word UNITY on a strip of paper (6" x 8" - half piece of construction paper). Cut the paper into several puzzle-shaped pieces, according to the number of students in your class. Use this as a class opener by distributing the pieces to your students and having them fit the puzzle together to find the message.

Answers for ANSWER

Let's Work Together!

Unity: All agreeing on the same thing. The verse below tells what it is like when we all work together to accomplish God's purpose. Write the second letter of the word or picture in that square. Then write each word in the correct order in the verse below. No fair peeking at the text!

BEHOLD, how GOOD and how PLEASANT
it is for BRETHREN to dwell TOGETHER in
UNITY!"

Psalm 133:1