

**Sermon Series:** Awake: The Call to a Renewed Life

**To be used with:** Session Five: Return to Unity

**Sermon Title Possibilities:**

Get Together

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:1-6, 13

**Connection to Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study of Awake: *The Call to a Renewed Life*, these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes regarding leadership, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit, focusing on the same topic, but using different Scripture.

Session Five of the small group material is called “Return to Unity.” The Scripture passage is Acts 4:31-37. The Point is “Walking with Christ brings us together in unity and purpose.”

**Introduction:** Unity matters to God. In the book of Ephesians, Paul spent the first three chapters of Ephesians arguing that God’s eternal purpose is one of unity. After three chapters of laying a solid doctrinal foundation, Paul offered practical instruction in chapters 4-6. The word *therefore* (4:1) shows that what follows is inextricably linked to what went before. After laying the doctrinal foundation, Paul made application to everyday life. What you believe affects how you behave. Unity, therefore, is vital.

Unity is not something that we achieve or attain. It already exists. Unity does not need to be created; it simply needs to be maintained. How do we maintain the unity of the faith?

### 1. Recognize the magnitude of unity (v. 1).

Paul urged believers “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Eph. 4:1 ESV). Christians should walk worthily of their calling as his body. We have been called into the life of Jesus. We are his. We are to walk or live in way that pleases him. What manner of living is worthy of the calling he has placed on our lives? First and foremost believers are to be unified with other believers.

### 2. Practice the means to unity (v. 2).

Paul revealed certain qualities that need to be practiced to maintain unity. These are relational qualities.

- A. Be humble. Humility means “lowliness of mind.” It is the opposite of pride, which is at the root of every sin. Pride is the number one enemy of harmonious relationships. Humility recognizes that all that we are and have are due to God’s grace.
- B. Show gentleness. Gentleness embodies “strength under control.” It describes a well trained horse. A tame horse is a powerful animal, but it is completely obedient to the tug of the rider. The gentle person controls their temper and does not retaliate or seek revenge.

- C. Practice patience. Patience means “long-tempered.” It is the opposite of a person with a short fuse. To preserve unity, we must practice patience with one another.
- D. Bear with one another. This is the quality that tolerates someone’s shortcomings or quirks. It means giving the other person room to be different in non-moral areas.
- E. Extend love. Love seeks the highest good of the other person. This keeps bearing with one another from turning into a grit your teeth and seethe on the inside kind of endurance. Bearing with one another means that you wait and pray for the right time, but love motivates you to get involved if the other person will let you.

### **3. Strive to maintain unity (v. 3).**

The word *maintain* implies exerting the effort to preserve unity. Peace isn’t passive. Unity doesn’t come through inactivity. You have to work to preserve unity.

Harmonious relationships in our homes and in the church will not happen automatically. At some point, your feelings will get hurt or you will hurt someone else’s feelings. Disagreements will occur, sometimes over difficult issues. Personality clashes will happen, when someone gets on your nerves. Different preferences exist, sometimes over minor matters, but sometimes over important things. We must exert a lot of effort to work through problems in a godly manner.

For that to happen, we look long and hard at the attitudes we carry. Unity doesn’t begin in examining others but in examining oneself. Unity begins, not in demanding that others change, but in admitting that we aren’t perfect ourselves. Unity grows as we learn to accept others differences and to forgive when wronged. Unity continues as we humbly serve those who are different. Unity is favored as we loving take the message of Jesus Christ to a divided world. Unity is fulfilled as we focus on *who* we believe in rather what we believe in.

### **4. Follow the model of unity (vv. 4-6).**

By definition, the Body of Christ is one. Paul employs the metaphor of the body and elaborates on the unity that the Church must have. There are many members of the body, and some are as different as night and day. But they all have a commonality, whether they are a finger or a nose or a kidney. They were all made by God and joined together to work together in the body. If the immune system stops functioning to protect the body, and instead attacks the body, a serious problem results. If the skin stops functioning to keep harmful things out, and starts letting them in instead, serious consequences will result. The same is true of the Church. If the Church, the Body, stops functioning as it ought, it will not be healthy.

This body metaphor is organic for a reason. It is alive, so it grows and adapts. The human body has many, many diverse parts, but they all work together as one. They are united in function and purpose. If one member of the body struggles, another one or a group jumps in to help out.

This is a wonderful picture of the church. We grow and adapt. The church has many, many diverse people, but we all work together as one. We are all united in function and purpose. If one member of the church is struggling, then another member or members jumps in to help out. That

is why we were saved into the church, because by living in a united church, we honor God in Christ.

### **5. Grow in maturity for unity (v. 13).**

Disunity is often a sign of immaturity. Unity is a sign of maturity. Mature people let insignificant things slide. Mature people overlook the faults of others.

The more God's Word is practiced, the closer we will become to a unified body. At the heart of unity is the knowledge of Jesus Christ and love for him. The more we know the Son of God in an intimate, personal way the more deeply, we will experience a closer unity in Christ.

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