



## “Grace for a Purpose Driven Life” – Week 11

### Introduction:

1. The title of our study this a.m. is: “Protecting Your Church”
  - this is the LAST chp dealing with *Purpose #2: You Were Formed for God’s Family* – next week, we’ll pick up *Purpose #3: You Were Created to Become Like Christ!*
2. I want to start our time by considering two passages:
  - Ephesians 4:3 **Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**
  - Colossians 3:14 **Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**
  - If there is one thing these verses make clear:
    - 1) God is very interested in the unity of His church AND
    - 2) It is your job to protect that unity in our church.
3. The OT even addresses the issue in Psalm 133:
  - Psalm 133:1 **Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!**

**Input:** When we hear the term ‘unity’ – how would you define that term? What words or phrases come to your mind?

‘unity’ = a state *oneness, unison*

> Unity is the soul of fellowship

> it is the essence (core) of how God intends for us to experience life together in his church.

4. What is the best example of unity that you can possibly find?

Answer: Our supreme model for unity is the Trinity.

- John 17:20 **"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.**

Point: If you want to understand *unity*, look at the Trinity!

- Sad to say, some church, don’t model ‘unity’ very much . . .

- Instead, what do you have?
  - > Griping / fussing / strife / division

**Q: What are some of the implications (consequences) of a church NOT being unified?**

[kills progress/ evangelism, etc.]

*“Nothing on earth is more valuable to God than his church. He paid the highest price for it, and he wants it protected, especially from the devastating damage that is caused by division, conflict, and disharmony. If you are a part of God’s family, it is your responsibility to protect the unity where you fellowship. You are commissioned by Jesus Christ to do everything possible to preserve the unity, protect the fellowship, and promote harmony in your church family and among all believers.” – p. 161*

5. The question on the table is this: How are we to do this? How do we deal with the issue of unity in the body of Christ – especially
- Let remember our key verse:
    - Ephesians 4:3 **being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

**I. Focus on What We Have in Common, Not Our Differences.**

**Input:**

- I thought the author made a very good point:
  - > God chose to give us different personalities, backgrounds, races, and preferences, so we should value and enjoy those differences, not merely tolerate them.

*“God wants unity, not uniformity.” – p. 161*
- Keep the main thing, the main thing – the question is: *WHAT IS THE MAIN THING OF THE CHURCH?*

Cf. Matthew 28:19-20 [READ]

  - \* Conflict is usually a sign that the focus has shifted to less important issues, things the Bible calls “disputable matters.”
- A few verses that help us with this subject:
  - Romans 14:1 **Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.**
  - 2 Timothy 2:23 **But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.**
  - 1 Corinthians 1:10 **Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.**

**II. Be Realistic In Your Expectations.**

- One of the things that God wants us to do is to learn to show tolerance / preference to one another!
- Ephesians 4:2 **with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.**

*“Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity. On the other hand, settling for the real without striving for the ideal is complacency. Maturity is living with the tension.” – p 162*

- That’s a nice way of saying, **“Every church has baggage”** – until the millennium, there is no perfect church

Q: *Why?* Because we are ALL sinners – note the ALL (not just the pastors!)

**Input:** For what reasons do people become disillusioned with the church?

*“Because we’re sinners, we hurt each other, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. But instead of leaving the church, we need to stay and work it out if at all possible. Reconciliation, not running away, is the road to stronger character and deeper fellowship.” – p. 162-163*

- The GODLY thing to do is to COMMUNICATE And try to solve problems biblically!
- Instead, some folks get bitter – angry – resentful – and . . . PROUD (I’m right and everybody else is wrong!) – and they RUN from problems instead of *GROWING in GRACE!*

*“Divorcing your church at the first sign of disappointment or disillusionment is a mark of immaturity. God has things he wants to teach you, and others, too. Besides, there is no perfect church to escape to. Every church has its own set of weaknesses and problems. You’ll soon be disappointed again.” – p. 163*

### III. Choose to Encourage Rather Than Criticize. It Is Always Easier to Criticize Than to Make A Contribution.

- I’m going to read several verses and just let the Word of God speak for itself:

- Romans 14:13 **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.**
- James 4:11 **Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.**
- Matthew 5:9 **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.**
- James 5:9 **Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.**
- Romans 14:4 **Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

- \* Whenever I judge another believer, four things instantly happen:

1. I lose fellowship with God
2. I expose my own pride
3. I set myself up to be judged by God
4. I harm the fellowship of the church

*“It’s the Devil’s job to blame, complain, and criticize members of God’s family. Anytime we do the same, we’re being duped into doing Satan’s work for him. Remember, other*

*Christians, no matter how much you disagree with them, are not the real enemy. Any time we spend comparing or criticizing other believers is time that should have been spent building the unity of our fellowship” – p. 164*

#### IV. Refuse to Listen to Gossip.

Q: What is the definition of gossip?

“Gossip” = passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.

- This is an excellent statement the Warren made:

*“People who gossip to you will also gossip about you.”*

- Paul gives us a very strong warning:

- Galatians 5:15 **But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

- If there is one thing that will destroy the unity of the body – it’s gossip!

Q: What should you do if someone starts gossiping to you?

#### V. Practice God’s Method For Conflict Resolution.

[– Key principle: Keep the circle of knowledge as small as possible!]

- Matthew 18:15 **"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**

- Take the initiative – don’t wait for them to come to you if you know they are sinning  
cf. Matthew 5:23-25; Galatians 6:1-2

Q: What affect does church discipline have on a person life?

[READ 1 Cor. 5:1-5

#### VI. Support Your Pastors and Leaders.

- Hebrews 13:17 **Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.**
- Pastors will one day stand before God and give an account of how well they watched over you.  
> YOU will give an account to God of how well you followed your leaders.

**Input:** What do the following verses teach regarding the Bible gives pastors very specific instructions on how to deal with divisive people in the fellowship.

- 2 Timothy 2:14 **Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.**

- Titus 2:15 **These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. 1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.**
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12 **But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.**
- 1 Corinthians 10:24 **Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.**
- Philippians 2:3 **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

*“I challenge you to accept your responsibility to protect and promote the unity of your church. Put your full effort into it, and God will be pleased. It will not always be easy. Sometimes you will have to do what’s best for the Body, not yourself, showing preference to others. That’s one reason God puts us in a church family – to learn unselfishness. In community we learn to say “we” instead of “I”, and “our” instead of “mine.” God says, “Don’t think only of your own good, Think of other Christians and what is best for them.” – P. 166*

**Q: What are you doing personally to make your church family more warm and loving?**

## **“Grace for a Purpose Driven Life” – Week 11 (Chp. 21)**

### **Protecting Your Church**

#### **Introduction:**

**Input:** When we hear the term ‘unity’ – how would you define that term? What words or phrases come to your mind?

*‘unity’ = a state of oneness, unison*

**Q: What is the best example of unity that you can possibly find?**

**Q: What are some of the implications (consequences) of a church NOT being unified?**

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**I. Focus on What We Have in \_\_\_\_\_, Not Our \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Input:** What do we (an ABF/church family) have in common?

*“God wants unity, not uniformity.”*

**II. Be \_\_\_\_\_ - In Your \_\_\_\_\_.**

*“Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity. On the other hand, settling for the real without striving for the ideal is complacency. Maturity is living with the tension.”*

**Input:** For what reasons do people become disillusioned with the church?

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**III. Choose to \_\_\_\_\_ Rather Than Criticize. It Is Always Easier to Criticize Than to Make A \_\_\_\_\_.**

- Romans 14:13; James 4:11; Matthew 5:9; James 5:9; Romans 14:4

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1. I lose fellowship with \_\_\_\_\_
2. I expose my own \_\_\_\_\_
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*“It’s the Devil’s job to blame, complain, and criticize members of God’s family. Anytime we do the same, we’re being duped into doing Satan’s work for him. Remember, other Christians, no matter how much you disagree with them, are not the real enemy. Any time we spend comparing or criticizing other believers is time that should have been spent building the unity of our fellowship”*

**IV. Refuse to Listen to \_\_\_\_\_.**

“Gossip” = passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution.

*“People who gossip to you will also gossip about you.”*

**V. Practice God’s Method For \_\_\_\_\_.**

**VI. Support Your \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Input:** What do the following verses teach regarding the Bible giving pastors very specific instructions on how to deal with divisive people in the fellowship.

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**‘unity’ = a state of *oneness, unison***

**Q: What is the best example of unity that you can possibly find?**

- **John 17:20-23**

**Q: What are some of the implications (consequences) of a church NOT being unified?**

**Quote – p. 161**



. Ephesians 4:3

**I. Focus on What We Have in Common, Not Our Differences.**

**Input: What do we (an ABF/church family) have in common?**

***“God wants unity, not uniformity.”***

. Romans 14:1; 2 Tim. 2:23; 1 Cor. 1:10

**II. Be Realistic In Your Expectations.**

. Ephesians 4:2

***Quote – p 162***

**“Every church has baggage.”**

**Input: For what reasons do people become disillusioned with the church?**

***Quote – p. 162-163***

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. Matthew 18:15-18

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. Hebrews 13:17

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- . Titus 2:15**
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- . 1 Corinthians 10:24**
- . Philippians 2:3-4**

***Quote – p. 166***