

How Can We Have Spiritual Unity? (by Ray Reynolds)

In our worship services we sing songs about unity. We pray for unity. In the Bible we read about unity. Unity in the Spirit is required for Christian believers. I want to share with you four things about Spiritual unity:

(1) SPIRITUAL UNITY REQUIRES CHRIST-LIKE LOVE. Love to all saints means love unfeigned and authentic. This kind of love produces honesty, sympathy, and genuine care for others. It is a love that produces benevolence, tenderness, pity, and mutual edification. Love in deed and not merely in word. When we join together in prayer and worship in spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**). The phrase "love one another" is used 21 times in the Bible. It is the second greatest commandment (**Matthew 22:39**). Remember that we need to love others like Jesus.

(2) SPIRITUAL UNITY REQUIRES CHRIST-LIKE HUMILITY. The Bible teaches us that pride causes contention and goes before a fall (**Proverbs 16:18**). We can never be united while we stand divided against each other. We often stand with our preconceived ideals and opinions that give us a false sense of superiority. The church of Christ is Christ's church! He is the Head of the church (**Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 1:18**). If we think of ourselves in the spirit of Christian humility, we will link arm in arm together at the foot of the cross, which requires us to look past our differences. Remember that we need to be humble like Jesus and look at others the way He did.

(3) SPIRITUAL UNITY REQUIRES CHRIST-LIKE FORBEARANCE. This is a big and strange word to some of us, though it is often urged in the Scriptures. For instance, **Colossians 3:13** says, "*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another.*" The word means to "bear with" or to "endure." When you look this word up in the dictionary or thesaurus you will see words alongside it like patience, self-control, restraint, tolerance, and mercy. All of these words are used over and over in the Bible. The Scriptures demand true unity no matter the cost (**John 17:20-23, I Corinthians 1:9-10**). Why have people given up on the pursuit of true unity? Remember that we need to practice forbearance like Jesus or unity will never be found.

(4) SPIRITUAL UNITY REQUIRES CHRIST-LIKE RELIGION. Some people have a false sense of what true unity requires. We are to lead people to Jesus first, then they are added to the church (**Acts 2:47**). The Scriptures speak of religion in a positive way. Pure and undefiled religion (**James 1:26-27**). Thayer's dictionary defines "religion" [threskeia] as religious worship "especially external." Many are religiously unified like the Athenians (**Acts 17:21-23**) and the Jews (**Romans 10:1-3**). There were also many Jewish sects (**Matthew 22:15-46, Acts 26:5**). This type of unity is limited and unsound (**Acts 23:5-7**). If we look at religion through the eyes of James, we see that we cannot throw others under the bus or ignore people that are not like us. Remember that we need to seek the image of Jesus and our religion should meet His standards.

If there is one thing that we see consistently it is that spiritual unity demands complete unity. It leaves no room for compromise (**I Corinthians 12:13, Romans 8:29, Galatians 3:26-29**). However, all spiritual concepts deal with the inner man, or that which is in his heart (**I Corinthians 2:11-14, I Corinthians 3:1-3**), which means it starts with a mental, conscious choice to pursue it. Will you pursue unity? The only way to achieve it would be for you to personally make it a goal. Seek love, humility, forbearance, and religion just like Jesus. Then, maybe, others will follow. The change begins with you! Have a great week!