

Endeavoring To Keep The Unity

Unity in the Family & Church Through Leadership

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Tomorrow is the U.S. national holiday of Father's Day. A husband and father profoundly affect the unity of his family. He must endeavor to keep that unity, that unity of the spirit, so that his family does not deteriorate into chaos and sin. It is hard work, but it is a responsibility that a father and a husband have been given by God.

Similar principles are involved regarding the unity of the family, and the unity of the Church—— both must have strong and gentle leadership. They require a leadership of both steel and velvet. You will recognize that term. Aubrey Andelin, in his book "Man of Steel and Velvet," observed this about a righteous man's relationship with his wife and children:

"Women and children are entitled to firm leadership. They will love you more, respect you more and feel far more secure if you will not yield against your better judgment."

In contrast, the lack of unity in a man's family overshadows all of his worldly successes.

Mr. Andelin also said this, having to do with failure

"A failure in the home is a man's greatest failure. He may have made notable contributions in science, industry or government, but what can atone for a failure in the home?"

Unity in a Christian family, has a positive effect on the unity of the Church of God; therefore, disunity has a negative effect. A man's failure in his home carries over into the congregation that he attends, and affects it in a negative way.

As a theological term, 'unity' is used to indicate a oneness whether of sentiment, affection, or behavior, as in Psalm 133:1 where David says, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!*" In that statement by David we see that oneness implied.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some

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prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

The "unity of the faith" is the dedicated belief of the same great truths of God, and having the same confidence in Jesus Christ. Spiritual unity requires knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, followed by the right application of that knowledge.

Paul states the principle of unity in the same chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This principle applies both to the human family and especially to the church family.

The "unity of the Spirit" is the union between Christ and his saints by which the same divine Spirit dwells in both. Those who have the same righteous character and goals have this unity of the Spirit.

This means that there is a unity between the saints because we are joined to the same head (Jesus Christ), and we have the same Spirit dwelling in us. We have the same graces of faith, hope and love, and are rooted and grounded in the same doctrine of Christ. We bear the same mutual affection for one another.

We do not usually think of this "endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit" in verse 3, in terms of our families, but it certainly does apply. Of great importance is the leadership role of the father in his family. A father must understand the right application of God's truth so that he can promote righteous standards within his family. He must promote unity by imitating Jesus Christ. The father is the leader of the family, and Jesus Christ is the leader of the church, and so Jesus Christ is the one to emulate and imitate.

Paul emphasizes that this whole subject of unity is of utmost importance in the church and that we should never lose sight of it. There is a tendency in some independent Christians to justify their independence by ignoring the principle of unity. Reacting

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against the false notions of unity, they tend to go to the other extreme by saying that it is of no consequence, and that it is not important.

But, if the Church is the body of Christ, unity is essential and vital. The writings of the apostles leave us in no doubt of this. To be guilty of schism and of wrong division is sinful, as Paul makes clear in I Corinthians 12, and in other places. John records that Jesus Christ, in His prayer, prays that believers could be one. So there is no doubt that unity is an important aspect and characteristic of the church of God

The importance of unity should be obvious to all who have ever thought about this doctrine of the church in terms of the analogy of the human body. That analogy also makes any argument against the importance of the doctrine of unity idle talk.

Because of unity's centrality to any body it is important that we understand the true nature of unity. The right idea of unity is essential. There is a unity in the body of Christ whether we are aware of it or not, a unity of the Spirit. We must be clear as to the character, and the nature of this unity. Many people, it seems, do not understand the true concept of unity. So, the wrong concept that many people have takes them in a wrong direction, and they are wasting their time in the unity that they are trying to form within their families and within the church.

What is it that brings unity into being? What is it that hinders unity?

The apostle Paul makes things very clear in terms of his analogy of the body. The first thing is that we must never think of unity in the church, or in our families, as a merely external, mechanical or organizational matter. Paul's illustration of the body shows this type of thinking to be wrong.

People with this viewpoint of unity start by looking at church organizations as they are; and simply raise the question as to how these organizations can be brought together. But that is a mechanical approach to the problem.

If Paul's analogy of the body is correct, then the mechanical unifiers, people who try to unify churches through mechanical means, by demands and such, have already gone astray. A body is not simply a collection of parts, and unity is never a matter of addition, that is, adding this to that, and that to another. This false mechanical reasoning inevitably leads to the wrong approach to unity. In a body, this mechanical approach to unity would be to remove an arm and sew it somewhere else on the body. Therefore, in a sense, mechanically or surgically trying to force unity. That is not how unity comes about, but that is the approach that many take when they ask why we cannot unite with

other church organizations.

In other words, according to the analogy of the body we must never think of unity in terms of the removal of divisions.

The mechanical, or organizational approach, begins with the presumption that a divided church is the greatest tragedy in the world today. This approach asks the question, "How can we get rid of these divisions?" It is faulty reasoning to imagine that by removing divisions you produce unity.

Again, one quick look at the analogy of the body exposes this false reasoning. It is based on the fatal error of starting with things as they are—with the organizations or with the splinter groups—to try to do something to unify them.

Instead, we have to think in a more fundamental manner. We must realize that our first responsibility is to understand the basic nature of the church, before we can realize the nature of the unity of the church.

The principle of unity must never be placed first, because unity is not something in and of itself; it is always the result of something else. We should not try to start with unity, but we should begin with the nature and character of the church, and then see from this that unity is inevitable. That is, by seeing the righteousness and the holiness of the church and the purity. By understanding this, we know that we cannot demand unity.

The body itself is of primary importance, and unity—essential as it is—is just one of the characteristics of the body.

In a family, a father may try to unify his family by making demands that they be unified, but that is a worthless command. Unity in the family is founded on Godly principles and characteristics of the body, such as common Godly values and goals.

These Godly principles and characteristics of the body, are foundational with regard to this whole matter of unity. It is because these principles are forgotten, that there is such confusion in the church groups and families.

Many commonly make the mistake of asking, "What we can do about the disunity between the greater Churches of God?" We are more correct to say to ourselves: "Let these other groups be what they like." Our responsibility is to discover the real nature and character of the church lead by Jesus Christ and look to Him, and His example, for that unity.

Many members ask, "How can God's church become more unified"? The true spiritual church of God is unified! That is, those who have a close relationship to Jesus Christ, and live His way of life. It is not restricted by the political boundaries of corporations. It is not bound by human restraint! The disunity is among individuals who have not totally submitted themselves to God the Father and Jesus Christ in love and obedience. That is where the disunity that we see in the church comes from but it is not a characteristic of the church. Disunity is never a characteristic of the true church of God.

The whole conception of unity of some in the church is wrong, because they misunderstand this. They think in mechanical terms and try to lower barriers, and try to improve the situation in an organizational way, instead of realizing that the entire approach is wrong.

I am not saying that we should be antagonistic toward other groups, but that we cannot force unity in the church between different groups any more than we can force our families to be unified by demanding it. Unity, within a church or family, comes from a Godly character, as led by a righteous leader. So, if a man wants unity in his family he must work to become righteous, and apply those righteous principles in his family. In the church we already have a righteous leader, Jesus Christ, who is applying those principles and has a unified church.

What is it that determines unity? We are going to look at five principles that determine unity both in the family, as well as in the church.

The first essential principle of what determines unity is true belief in God the Father and Jesus Christ and belief in the truth of God. It is an obvious statement, but it is a very important one.

Jesus simply states this essential truth in John 10:

John 10:30 I and My Father are one.

That is a profound statement, but it is absolutely perfect.

Regarding the Father and Son being 'one' it is interesting what Barnes' Notes explains on that:

"The word translated "one" is not in the masculine, but in the neuter gender. It expresses union, but not the precise nature of the union. It may express

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any union, and the particular kind intended is to be inferred from the connection. In the previous verse He had said that He and His Father were united in the same object that is, in redeeming and preserving his people. It was this that gave occasion for this remark. Jesus was referring to the oneness or unity of nature between the Father and Himself."

So, we see that the unity, or oneness, that Jesus Christ and the Father have between themselves is not emphasizing an organizational unity, it is emphasizing their character, their very nature.

This oneness, or unity of nature, is based on truth abiding in us, without it there can be no unity. The Apostle John described the loving relationship with God based on eternal truth. In II John 1-3, John expressed joy and gratitude of learning that the children of the 'elect lady' had embraced the truth, and were walking in it. It is interesting that he refers to both the truth and the walking in it. It may literally refer to a woman and her children, but figuratively of course, John's reference to the 'elect lady' refers to God's church, and 'her children' refers to individuals who have been called to her for nurturing.

II John 1 THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,

We see the tie-in to unity being truth. John is sincerely and truly attached and unified to this family of truth-seekers.

II John 2 ?because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

John loves this family, and is unified with it, because it loves the truth, that unifying factor. He is joyful at seeing it so warmly held and guarded and so happily represented by the 'elect lady,' the church. Those who love the truth itself are pleased with all of the effects it produces in individuals and their families. This love of the truth unifies the children of the 'elect lady.'

II John 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

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This truth and love is connected with the grace, mercy and peace mentioned there in verse 3. It is a prayer that grace, mercy and peace will be given to this family as they live with and promote truth and love.

Paul reminds us of our calling to this unity of nature, or oneness of belief, that comes from true belief in God. This comes from knowing and living God's way of life, and knowing and living His truth.

Ephesians 4:3-6 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Paul does not begin to talk about endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in chapter one of Ephesians, but in chapter four. Having already laid down the great fundamental doctrines of the faith, he says 'Therefore,' and then Paul introduces his teaching concerning the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The order here I think is somewhat important.

But modern Christianity places unity in chapter one figuratively; it starts with it, and men are preaching unity instead of preaching truth, repentance, overcoming, obedience and the gifts of salvation and eternal life. They are missing the point of what unity comes from.

All the talk is about unity, and people are not preparing themselves for the Kingdom of God. In mainstream Christianity today, we see this unity given priority and true doctrines watered down and ignored—for the sake of 'unity.'

Many churches do not 'guard the truth' to protect it, they ignore it in favor of tradition or human reasoning. A case in point is the mainstream Christian movement toward accepting homosexuality within their congregations. They ignore the truth, and in their human reasoning, purely from wanting to unify their churches, they allow flagrant, blatant and perverted sin within their midst directly against Scripture, the source of truth.

Religious leaders today are fearful that they will become dis-unified, resulting in the splitting of their congregations, or the loss of their members, if they do not accept the sinful desires of perverted people. God has not given His true church a spirit of fear, but He has given us a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Just this one quality, or characteristic of God's true church, puts a giant chasm between the "Christian

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churches" of this world and God's true church, because they are churches that are fearful that they will lose membership.

Deceitful and corrupt leaders humanly reason that they must keep unity in the church at any cost, for fear that they will see their pay checks disappear or lose their position of power.

Let me illustrate this misunderstanding of unity, with a discussion I had in 1992 with a long time member of the Worldwide Church of God. It is a conversation that has always stuck in my mind and whenever I think of unity I think of this example.

A few days after Sue and I left the Worldwide Church of God, a man called me to tell me that he was also concerned and disgusted with the doctrinal changes the Worldwide Church of God was making. But he said that he was not going to leave because 'keeping his family unified' was the most important thing to him. He was going to do that no matter what.

He said that if he stood up against the doctrinal changes of the Worldwide Church of God and left, removing himself from the confusion of the doctrinal changes that had been flowing out of that organization for several years during the early 90's, he feared his children would not know what to do.

So, he stayed in the Worldwide Church of God for several years after that. He eventually left to attend one of the more liberal splinter groups. His children went in several directions, most of which were away from the truth of God. This father, who followed his own view of unity, had placed his goal of 'unity' in his family above guarding the truth of God and being obedient—above standing firm in the faith—above giving a true witness of the testimony of Jesus Christ.

He was the leader of his family, and if he followed the correct and faithful narrow way, then his children would have had a beacon to follow. Maybe, he would not have kept all of his children together in his family, but more would have had that example and stayed firm.

Mainstream Christians, and this father, do not realize that unity results from something else and is the consequence, the corollary of something else. That something else is not organizational, it is not mechanical, but it is the principle of truth and love. This principle of truth and love is also seen in the phrase 'speaking the truth in love' in Ephesians 4:15. That is what a father has to do in his family, he has to speak the truth and stand for it and apply it in a loving manner.

We must not put love before truth; we are to speak the truth in love. We are not merely to speak lovingly, or simply be nice and friendly; we are to speak the truth in love. Truth must always come first. Love cannot be understood without the truth. This is very clear from scripture.

John 15:9-10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

II John 6 "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments."

We walk according to His truth.

John 4:23-24 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth."

I am not saying that truth is greater than love, but that truth must come first for love to be true love—Godly love, agape love.

It is impossible to discuss unity with a man who diminishes the value of the truth, and denies that Jesus has come in the flesh and was resurrected from the dead. Truth is absolutely necessary for unity. I am talking about Godly unity, true spiritual unity. We see a certain type of unity in political parties but it is only on the surface, while within they are trying to destroy each other.

How can we discuss the unity of the Church with a person who does not acknowledge the one true Lord and Savior, who died so our sins may be forgiven, and who rose literally from the grave. A person with the spirit of truth has no basis for the discussion of unity with the person who has the spirit of error.

I John 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Jesus Christ abiding in us is extremely important for unity and we know this by keeping His truth.

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I John 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We see that unity is impossible between people of different spirits. We must be rooted and grounded in the truth, and believe in all of the doctrine taught by Paul about the sovereignty of God in chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Ephesians. God has called us, and chosen us before the foundation of the world, for this purpose of standing for the truth and overcoming and being prepared for the Kingdom of God.

What unity can there be with the person who does not accept the unique deity of Christ and the shedding of His blood for us; and, who does not believe that we have an individual responsibility to overcome sin and live righteously? How can we be unified with anyone who does not believe that we have work to do in living righteously and overcoming sin? We see the same situation in the family, there cannot be true spiritual unity in a family if the members are not in agreement with what God's truth is, and what sin is, and overcoming it and living righteously.

This is the truth that we are to speak in love. If we disagree about the vitals and fundamentals of the truth of God, to talk about maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is a waste of time for us to even bother. We can have no meeting of the mind with a person who sees no value in living by every word of God.

We cannot pray with such a person because we are not praying in the same way. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2 that we can only pray acceptably as 'We both, that is Jews and Gentiles, have access through Him, that is Jesus Christ, by one Spirit to the Father'—and this is the only way.

So we should not waste our time and energy talking of unity or praying together, before we have begun to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This means that we have to begin to learn God's truth with a humble and

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teachable attitude.

We must have some understanding of His doctrines. Without the doctrines, without the truth—there is no center of reference—there is no righteous standard by which to be unified, whether it is in a family or in a church.

The next principle of what determines unity is our right relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and our union with them. It may be an obvious next principle but it is a very, very important one.

Can a man be an ideal husband or father without a right relationship to his Creator and Sustainer?

Can a member of God's church be an ideal servant without a right relationship to his Savior? Now a man in the world may be able to develop many positive characteristics but he cannot have that true spiritual unity in his family, or in the church, unless he has this right relationship.

Aubrey Andelin, as I mentioned earlier, in his book *Man of Steel and Velvet*, explains what being the ideal man entails.

"Our crucial times require men of strong minds, kind hearts, and willing hands, men who find joy in labor, men of courage, honor and strong opinions, clear minds and high goals ? men who are not afraid of great responsibility, men who can become dedicated to a task and will surrender their own selfish desires and pursuits to a life of service, men whose word is as good as their bond.

But along with this fiber of steel there must be a gentle nature. We need men who can appreciate a sunset or a sunrise, men who love their families with passion and honor, men who adore womanhood, yet dislike weakness or coyness. We need men with compassion, sensitive to the needs of the less fortunate, men who are tender with their wives and children, men who have developed an ability to love."

This ideal man is only possible from a right relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ because 'the ideal' is revealed through our spiritual relationship with God. The ideal is Christ in us.

In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that we are not to have any 'fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' And, as the apostle John pointed out in his second epistle, we are not to have any fellowship with, or to bid Godspeed to a person who does not have Christ in him.

It is important to understand why we have to have a unified relationship with God. Unity is not a matter of humanly formed organizations merging together; it is rather a question of being a branch in the vine, a member of the spiritual body. Since the church is the spiritual body of Christ, this relationship is inevitable. The question is not, 'Can I have fellowship with this person or that?' A widow or widower could ask the same question, before they are about to marry another person. The true question is: Am I 'in Christ' and is he 'in Christ'? That is the important question to ask. That is the point at which we have to start. Because, if I am in Christ, I cannot have fellowship with those who are not branches in the vine; and vice versa. It is part of the principle of being unequally yoked together.

Apart from Jesus Christ there is no life in the church. Jesus Himself made this quite clear in His parable of the true vine, as recorded in John 15.

When Jesus called Himself "the true vine," He was not contrasting Himself with something false. He was not "the true light," or "the true vine" as opposed to the untrue. But He called Himself true in reference to the perfect ideal, as opposed to all more or less imperfect representations. Jesus is ideally true. Being 'ideally true' (of which the natural vine is a figure) is fulfilled in Him.

John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

When Jesus said '*I am the vine and you are the branches.*' He was not implying that one is separate from the other. 'Vine' is the comprehensive term implying unity and diversity because the root, stem, branches, leaves, tendrils and the grapes are all of the vine. Christ is all in all, He is everything and we are parts of Him. We are vitally connected to Him as branches to the vine. Severed from Him we are useless and we are not unified.

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John 15:6-8 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

We have a responsibility to bear much fruit, to live God's way of life and to teach others. If we are fathers we have a responsibility, given to us by God, to teach those principles to our children if we want true unity within the family.

The vine exists for fruit bearing, and this means that the sap fits well to represent the Holy Spirit that is so vitally necessary in carrying nutrients and life through the vine, into the branches. The life is in the vine; and it flows into the branches.

The various parts forming the vine as a whole, express unity and interdependence. The root is of no use without the stem, and the stem is of no use without the branches, and the branches are of no use without the fruit.

Christ is the life, and without this union——this vital relationship——the church is lifeless and useless. This is obvious in theory, but it is something we can so easily forget and miss.

Ours is a living union with Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which produces fruit in life and service. We are different from the vine, in that we do not produce fruit we only bear it. Fruit is of the Spirit.

Another principle of what determines unity, involves living a spiritual and a righteous life! Life must come before unity, because unity is a result of life. The point is, that it involves spiritual life.

Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the life of the church, and is the source of all energy, vitality and power in the church. As we read earlier in Ephesians 4, Paul expresses it this way:

"But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies,"

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Sometimes members of the church become confused over the difference between activity and life. It is the difference between what is done by a machine, and what a man does.

In Galatians 5, Paul emphasizes the difference by contrasting the 'works of the flesh' and the 'fruit of the spirit.' The flesh 'works', it produces works as a machine does; but the Spirit produces fruit as a tree does. Everything that is spiritual is the result of life and of growth.

This distinction between activity and life was seen in the Worldwide Church of God, following Herbert Armstrong's death, especially at the headquarters in Pasadena. The church appeared to be full of life.

In looking at its appearance it was easy to see that there was always some kind of activity in the church during the week. The type of activities consisted of concerts, clubs and sports, and various other forms of entertainment.

Looking only on the surface, it is easy to confuse these activities with the manifestation of spiritual life. A church with such activities does not make it a spiritually alive church; a spiritually dead church can in fact be full of works and activities. We see this in mainstream Christianity.

This essential difference, between activity and life, is illustrated by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his exposition on Christian Unity. To picture the contrast between outward appearance and life, he describes something that happened in the early 1920s.

"At that time we read in the newspapers of two men, Mr. Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon, who had been working in Egypt and digging and searching in old tombs for months. At length they discovered a kind of coffin that seemed to be almost perfectly preserved, and they soon realized that it was that of an early Egyptian king called Tutankhamen. They opened it, and to their amazement they found the body of that king, who had been dead thousands of years, perfectly preserved.

Although he had been dead for so long the body showed no sign of decomposition whatsoever. The explanation of this phenomenon was that the Egyptians employed a system of embalming whereby, when a person died, they treated the body with various chemicals. This, together with the nature of the atmosphere in Egypt, being very dry, ensured that you could preserve a body almost indefinitely without any signs of decay or

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decomposition.

They found the body of Tutankhamen perfectly preserved; but it was also perfectly dead! There were no signs of decay or decomposition, but if you had asked that dead man a question he could not have answered. His body was quite unable to manifest life and power and activity, though perfectly preserved."

This is why Jesus referred to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 as 'whitewashed tombs.'

Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Neither a family nor a church can have any unity if they have only the appearance of righteousness.

Mainstream "Christian" churches emphasize external appearances and finance. The approach of these churches has been entirely wrong; and to make matters worse, they are dominated by the pop-culture idea. The controlling idea has been to find means of holding the young people who do not like sermons, but like drama, entertainment and games. There was an advertisement on the radio here in Charlotte, for a church locally inviting people to come and enjoy the fun; wear whatever you want, it is not like church at all. They certainly did not want to appear to be a church, or a religious organization. After all, they are only trying to promote Jesus Christ's life. Well they are not, and that is obvious.

The success of these pop-culture churches seemed to work for a while, but only for a short period, because there was nothing of any substance to unify them. They tried to unite—mechanically.

A similar thing happened to many of the small splinter groups from the Worldwide Church of God. They tried to mechanically unite, without having doctrines founded in truth. They chose their spiritual entrees "a la carte," picking doctrines from humanly reasoned standards. They may have had physical activity, but they had little or no spiritual life.

Christ is the life of the church, and if there is no vital relationship to Him there will be no life, and the church will be dead. The same holds true for the family on the spiritual level. It may look active, but it would just be like that corpse in the Tutankhamen coffin

The Worldwide church of God was not spiritual thinking, and the results were devastating. A church with spiritual life deteriorated into a church with an impressive amount of physical activity.

To believe that numbers, or the size of the church is what counts, contradicts the whole teaching of the bible. We find one teaching that runs through the bible from beginning to end—the teaching regarding "the remnant". God works repeatedly through a remnant, sometimes through one man.

Paul encourages us with an assurance that God does not forget his elect saints, who are only but a remnant.

Romans 11:1-5 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

The Head of the church, Jesus Christ, left the church in the hands of twelve men, a mere handful of the weak of the world. As we study the history of the church since the end of the New Testament we find the same thing—a handful of people led by a handful of men. Jesus Christ is always the ultimate Head of the church, and He is always in those who have His Spirit.

What matters is not numbers, but our relationship to Jesus Christ, and the purity of our doctrine, and the purity of our lives, and the purity of how we live. What matters is that the sap is flowing into the branches from the vine. Apart from this activity, all our activities lead to nothing.

Christ said, "*Without Me you can do nothing.*" Life is the one thing that matters; and the life is in Him. That power, strength, life and sustenance of the vine are flowing into us.

The same principle holds true in the home. A father unifies his family depending on the health of his spiritual life in Christ. If a father's spiritual life suffers, the whole family suffers and it splinters into disunity. Spiritual life and righteous character are synonymous. Righteous character must come before unity, because unity is a result of righteous character.

The next principle of what determines unity, is that it is the head who acts. Paul was inspired to reveal the mystery, concerning the marriage between husband and wife, and how it compares with Christ and the church. The head acts by loving, nourishing and cherishing the body.

Ephesians 5:22-33 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Notice the qualities necessary in unifying a physical family, and how they are obvious qualities of Jesus Christ—the head of the church.

Aubrey Andelin, in his book 'Man of Steel and Velvet,' describes the ideal leader in his function as head of the family, which he bases on biblical principles:

The ideal leader assumes the position as head of the family as a sacred responsibility. He takes pride in this masculine role, does not set it aside or turn it over to others. He has a keen feeling of responsibility for his place as leader, realizing that it is one of his most important functions in life. He

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serves patiently, with dedication and devotion.

He is a leader of steel and velvet. He has those steel qualities which accompany great leadership—firmness, decisive judgment, courage, steadfastness, and a keen sense of justice.

He rules over his flock with firmness. He does not allow others to dictate, to steal his leadership, to push him around or pressure him into things against his own judgment. He does not appease or make concessions. He fearlessly follows the dictates of his own convictions. But in his firmness he is always fair.

In making decisions he is always careful. If he does not have sufficient knowledge upon which to base a wise decision, he will carefully attain that knowledge. He will seek the counsel of his family members when necessary to get their ideas. But once he has made a decision based upon the best of his judgment, he will have the courage of his convictions, the steadfastness to follow through. He may make mistakes, but allows for those mistakes. He has the confidence that his judgment is usually sound. Because he has confidence in himself, others believe in him and follow him readily.

The ideal leader will also have velvet qualities. He has a kindly consideration for those he is leading, a tender-heartedness for the desires of others, unselfishness and a willingness to sacrifice his own pleasures for members of his family. Any leader must be unselfish if he is to be great.

But along with his velvet tenderness, a great leader must be a little hard-hearted at times. He must have the toughness of steel in following on what he considers a "right decision," even if it means bitter disappointment to those he is leading. This unalterable courage of his convictions is the supreme quality of leadership that brings "order to a household."

A great leader has humility. He is not too proud to listen to the counsel of his family members and, in fact, seeks their opinions when he feels the need to do so. If one of them is right and he is wrong, he is humble enough to admit it. He realizes that, being human, he has limitations, that others may contribute immeasurably to his leadership role, especially his wife.

With this combination of qualities—firmness, courage, decisive judgment, and justice, and the velvet traits of tenderness, consideration, and

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humility—a man is equipped to offer excellent leadership to his family, to bring order and peace to his household—the perfect situation in which to establish an ideal home and rear well-adjusted, happy children.

The unity of spirit and purpose in a man's family begins with his leadership, which he must make clear. The individual members of his family have a responsibility to submit to his authority and vision. They must have his same spirit and purpose clearly in mind. We know that two cannot walk together unless they are agreed.

With regard to unity in the church, the body does not act; it is the Head (Jesus Christ) that acts. It is Jesus Christ, the Head, who decides and determines when to act and how to act. Our responsibility is to do His righteous will.

Ephesians 4:15-16 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Jesus Christ, the Head, is the originator, His is the action, and we are just the channels through which His activity passes. Beginning in the early 1970s, the church fell into the continuous free-fall of enthusiastic activity from which it never recovered. It had been the activity of the members, not the activity of Jesus Christ, the Head. The direction that Worldwide took gave the members more responsibility for the activity, and the seeking of the purity and the holiness was forgotten and pushed aside.

Since the church is the body of Christ, the important questions are: What is the nature and the character of our activities? What is their spiritual value? Do they lead to spiritual results? That is how we can determine whether our activity is worthless or of value.

The fact that a church is very active does not, of necessity, prove that what she does is right; it may all be wrong as we observe in some organizations. A church group may be living on her own energy, doing things on her own initiative, and deliberately ignoring the Head, refusing to be submissive to Him. This happens in the family as well.

Because of our great freedoms today under this "has-been Republic", we have seen churches flourish in activity. Church activities abound, especially here in the South, in the world's churches. There is no indication that the early church, or the church down

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through the centuries, had divisions according to ages, and separate organizations and men's and women's clubs and individual groups for one purpose or another.

Historical facts indicate that they had few or none of these activities. It is not that these activities are, of and by themselves, wrong it is just that the pure numbers of those activities that our past affiliation had become involved in really was extremely detrimental spiritually.

Today, because of the dominant socialist mentality in this society, many people believe the national government (or the church government) should plan activities and entertainment for the citizenship (or, in the case of the church the members). But this is not the purpose and function of the church.

The church's responsibility is in areas of theology and religious conviction. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with the church planning activities, but they should never overshadow the God-given function of the church to: feed the flock, guard the truth, and make the gospel available to the world, especially to those who God is calling.

How do we analyze the value of activities? It is not by measuring the mere output of energy; but rather by judging the results to which it leads, the product. What does the activity produce? Since we may know a person by his fruit, we may also know an activity by its fruit.

If the relationship with the Head of the church is weak, the church is in no condition to be advertised to the world. Our first responsibility is to examine ourselves; our first duty is to make sure that the life of the Head is flowing through us. This should motivate us to repent and ask for mercy and forgiveness. We overcome our sins with the help of the Head, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:18-19 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Sometimes, instead of starting with prayer and discovering God's will, and putting ourselves at His disposal and waiting on Him, we decide and act. But, it is the Head who decides and acts, we are firmly bound to the Head, receiving from Him His activity, and placing ourselves happily at His disposal.

We now come to the final principle of what determines unity, which is, that—the call of God and our duty, is not so much to do anything as it is to be something. It is not our responsibility to just be busy, as much as it is to be a righteous servant.

We must be usable. The main hindrance to Christ working in us is that we may not be as usable as we should be. The lives of all the men who have been used by God as the greatest witnesses, all reveal the same prominent truth. Their first struggle was always the struggle with themselves, and with their own abilities and powers.

Eventually, a point came when they were driven to their knees, realizing their own responsibility. Then, they submitted themselves entirely to God. They all realized their total and absolute dependence on Jesus Christ and the truth of His words, *'Apart from Me you can do nothing.'*

The first question must not be, What can I do next? But, rather, What am I? Every one of us should ask ourselves that question personally. Ask to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit —to be filled with the mind of God — Jesus Christ in us. Ask this not only for yourself, but ask this for the whole church body. We are one body unified.

Christ is the Head. He said, *'I am the vine, you are the branches.'* We must be sure that we *'grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.'*

That "something" to be desired is found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Only men who achieve a balance of spiritual steel and velvet stand firmly with noble character. Referring to this man in the flesh, Aubrey Andelin expressed it this way, *"The supreme quality of manhood is the strength of a noble character."*

You remember that in the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8, the seeds that fell on the good fertile ground produced fruit because of the condition of their "heart."

Luke 8:15 But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

God's way of life is something that we must genuinely internalize with humility.

The supreme example of all that is good and important is of course, Jesus Christ. There was not an area of His life that was deficient. He never lost sight of His responsibility to complete 'the work that He was sent to do.' He was the ideal noble leader of men,

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woman and children, all the while true to His convictions until death. He had the moral convictions to introduce ideals and standards that were unpopular teachings of His day. He dedicated His life to the service and salvation of others, lifting people to better planes of thought and living. He was a masculine man possessing courage, determination, fearlessness, decisive judgment, and assertiveness.

He was skilled and masterful in a difficult situation, never afraid to face the hard-heartedness of His enemies. He was strong enough to toss the money-changers out of the temple. He maintained His dedication to His duty until the end, when He said, "*It is finished.*"

His character was spotless, built on the epitome of moral principles and standards of perfection. He was eager and enthusiastic about life, promising, "*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*"

Yet with all of His strength and courage, there was a gentleness about Him, that drew women and children to Him. Women wept at His feet and children surrounded Him. With all of this He had humility. Though He was worshipped as perfect, He denied His goodness, saying, "*There is none good but the Father.*"

Yet with this humility there was a self-dignity about Him that commanded respect. As He stood before the judgment of the high courts, He bore His false accusations valiantly and faced the scoffing multitudes with superb dignity. Jesus was the ideal man, He was perfect!

In conclusion we have to remember that not all great men are recorded in the pages of history. There are thousands, who have been both "steel and velvet" who are unknown to the world. They are men who have valiantly served their families, standing strong and firm as the leader of women and children, and faithful in Christ.

All of these men of true spiritual "steel and velvet" are, or (if now dead) were, the apple of God's eye—righteous physical fathers in Christ. Please do not ever underestimate the integrity of the fathers of the families in God's church. They have faithfully earned their bread "by the sweat of their face," and have been men in every sense of the word.

Although they have not won acclaim in the eyes of the world in general, they have nevertheless been real men. Their existence only proves that every man has the potential within his own world of being a man of steel and velvet by genuinely imitating the perfect man—Jesus Christ!

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Ephesians 4:13 "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

So let us fathers, husbands and members of God's church, strive to be that perfect man of steel and velvet that Jesus was.