

United We Rise

Alexander Averin, Ph.D.

Liberty University

School of Business

February 10, 2022

Abstract

Unity is something we all long for, however this notion of is often misunderstood, confused, and even abused. Many pulpits became the transmitters of “peace and unity at any cost” claiming that loving the enemy meant acquiescence to what the world was serving us. Jesus, however, did not call for cheap and compromised version of unity, the one that “cuts corners” to avoid conflict or confrontation. He called for the non-negotiable one that would follow our desperation for Him and complete denial of self and which can be achieved only by the power of the Holy Spirit and His authority over evil. Desperation for Jesus, His truth, and intimate relationship with Him is what God desires from us. His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is not only regaining our access to Him and restoration of our union with the Creator but recapturing the power and authority He gave us and which we surrendered to Satan in the garden of Eden. Unity that God desires does not come cheap, nor will it be readily welcomed by all. Thus, to be truly united, we must act. Donning on the armor of God and picking up the sword of the Spirit, we must engage the enemy of our soul. Conversely, inaction, will bring deadness to our faith and fractures to the body of Christ.

Keywords: *Jesus Christ, unity, desperation.*

Introduction

Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1)!¹ What a beautiful verse of Scripture, however, this very notion of unity is so misunderstood, confused, and often abused. Unity is something we all long for, and yet, how easily we are deceived in our thinking that when our Lord called us to be one it was not the end goal but a means to be effective for His glory, honor, and the power of His message of salvation. Undeniably, there is power in unity. Jesus, Himself did not hide it from us. He longed for us to be one as Him and His Father are one (John 10:30). However, Jesus did not call for cheap and compromised version of unity, the one that “cuts corners” to avoid conflict or confrontation. He called for the non-negotiable one that would follow our complete denial of self (Luke 9:23) and such passionate love toward Christ that everything else would look like hate (Luke 14:26). He called for our unhinged, unrestrained, unashamed desperation to be one with Christ.

Desperation for God’s truth, and for His honor and glory in our lives, in our families, the church, the nation, and the world is a life-changing appeal to the Almighty. It perfectly aligns with the how Jesus taught us to pray in verses nine through thirteen of the Book of Matthew: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thine name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When a person comes to a point of desperation, he or she has nothing to lose. This person becomes a threat to any despot or tyrant. It is an unstoppable force that gets God’s attention.

Unstoppable Force

Let’s look at the story of Jacob for a moment. This was a man whose very name meant “deception”. This was his identity and would have become his destiny unless his desperation for God’s blessings became an all-consuming passion. Verses twenty-two through thirty-one of Genesis Chapter Thirty-Two describe Jacob’s encounter with the angel of the Lord and the ensuing struggle. Anyone who ever participated in a wrestling match would understand the level of physical exhaustion that would overwhelm the body especially if the struggle lasted for hours.

This wrestling match was not only physical manifestation of God’s superiority but a spiritual revelation of what really was important to Jacob: his unquenchable yearning for God’s blessing, nothing else, no compromises. Jacob would not quit, he would not relent to a point that the angel of the Lord himself asked Jacob to stop. However, Jacob’s spiritual desperation for God’s hand upon his life was the only condition of his concession. This type of pursuit of God touches His heart with humanly unimaginable outcomes. For Jacob, this brought not only the abundant blessings of the Lord, but also a new identity and a changed destiny.

This type of hunger for God’s touch is what changed the life of the Canaanite woman who relentlessly pursued Jesus in Matthew 15:22-28. While this may be a familiar passage of Scripture, I must quote it here in order to expound on the unstoppable power of human desperation for the Lord that moves His heart:

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the King James Version (Toledo, OH: Christian Art Publishers, 2016).

the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

This was truly unprecedented at the time when Jesus spoke to the Canaanite woman and even now. The woman's desperation for God's blessing crossed every possible societal, cultural, and spiritual boundary known in first-century Israel. She knew she was not a part of God's chosen people. She was an outcast, a stranger, one who did not have any right to ask anything from God. However, that did not stop her even when Jesus Himself reminded her of that. And to add to this seeming rejection Jesus called her a dog. Imagine that, God, the Creator of the universe calls you a dog? This is the last thing any one of us would want to hear. And, I dare say, in our self-centered, hypersensitive culture, this would catapult the great majority of us to offence, bitterness, and forsaking the very pursuit of God that He wants for us. After all, how dare He to call me a dog? He has no right, He is supposed to love and bless me. Isn't it what the Bible says? These and similar questions driven by biblical ignorance, would bring us to a state of self-centered existence devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and any unity with Jesus.

This, however, was not the case for the Canaanite women. Jesus' seemingly persistent rejection of her plea did not deter her but, instead, drove her to the desperation for a deeper relationship with her creator and passion to worship Him. Her worship of Jesus in the midst of pain and rejection, without any conditions, without any regard for self, feelings, thoughts, and emotions, without any assurance that she will get what she wants, moved God's heart. The Lord became all-or-nothing, do-or-die passion for her, with everything else ceasing to exist. Overwhelming, powerful, unstoppable desperation for God is what changed everything for the woman, Jesus's disciples, and the history to come.

Divorcing oneself from any preconceived ideas, commitments, causes, and ideologies, one will obtain a clear vision of what Jesus wants him or her to do. Such emptiness of oneself is spiritually healthy and necessary. It turns the hunger for God's truth into a desperate obsession to pursue it at any cost. It invites the Master to execute the surgery of removing self as so profoundly described by A.W. Tozer in *The Pursuit of God*: "Self is an opaque veil that hides the face of God from us. It can be removed only in spiritual experience, never by mere instruction. We may as well try to instruct leprosy out of our system. There must be a work of God in destruction before we are free."²

Setting Free

Nineteen ninety-three was the year the truth of Jesus Christ set me free. Free from fear, anxiety, and emptiness, and purposelessness. I was 19 years old and all I had known about life is life of fear under the tyranny of the Soviet Union. I was born and raised in the very crib of the communist ideology, the birthplace of Vladimir Lenin. Needless to say, the religion of communism and unwavering commitment to it was not only expected but violently demanded from all who lived in the USSR. My parents, grandparents, and all known family members faithfully followed

² A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, Christian Publications, 1993), 44.

the precepts of Politburo. Questioning the ideology of communism and even doubting its purpose and goals was intolerable, and any dissenting voices were swiftly cancelled.

The rule of fear became a powerful driver to keep people “united” in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Fear was a necessary force to raise new generation of “compliant” and “committed” citizens and keep them in bondage to the dictatorship. Nothing outside of unquestioning commitment to the cause of the communism was accepted and anyone who had even an inkling of thinking differently was labeled “an enemy of the State” and quickly disappeared. This was true for anyone who sought the light outside if this dark state, especially if one was looking for God and the truth.

As a young schoolboy I remember the poster above the blackboard in my classroom reading: “Religion is the poison for the people”. This was one of the famous quotes by Vladimir Lenin, designed to engrain into young mind the fear of believing in anything else outside of the communist manifesto. This tactic worked, at least for a while. After all, what kid wanted to be “poisoned”? Furthermore, the fear seeded in classroom was watered at home where parents were willing to snitch on their neighbors for “undesirable” thinking, regardless whether it was true or not, in order to protect themselves and their families. The strategy was clear: use fear to take away parents’ rights to educate of their children from a nursery school all the way through college and create a society of zombie citizens devoid of freedom to think. This was the idea of “unity” that lasted for almost nine decades until the truth of God started to break through the minds and hearts of people.

True faith in Jesus Christ liberates. It frees your mind, your heart, and your soul as clearly expressed in John 8:32. Such freedom in Christ is dangerous for any tyrant, because one who chooses to lose his life for Christ has nothing else to lose. The grip of tyranny breaks for such person. He becomes salt and light to drive away corruption and expose the darkness. This is exactly what happened to me when I heard the message of Jesus through one His followers, a missionary from the United States, who came to preach the Gospel to a spiritually and physically starved people.

Can We Be One?

I remember a time after the defrauded 2020 election, amidst obvious and rising ideological polarization, one good brother in Christ asked me a question whether there would be a day when we all will have peace with each other and be united regardless of our worldviews. This was an innocent question based on a basic human desire to have peace and to be at peace. However, the humanness of this question was the very thing that drove his hope for peace and unity. It stopped right there, sabotaged by the lack of biblical knowledge that was revealed to us so richly in God’s word.

Christ spoke of peace many times throughout His ministry on earth. His very name is Prince of Peace, His birth was ushered with the promise of “peace on earth and good will to all men” (Luke 2:14). Unfortunately, taken out of the context of God’s plan for redemption of the humankind and defeating Satan, this and similar verses of Scripture brought the church to the distorted, unbiblical understanding of peace. Many pulpits became the transmitters of “peace and unity at any cost” claiming that loving the enemy meant acquiescence to what the world was serving us. After all, Jesus would want that, right? Wrong!

Christ was unequivocal about giving the glory and honor to His Father! He demonstrated God’s holy, uncompromising nature, where His love of God meant hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13,

Amos 5:15, Psalms 97:10). The problem with the “unity” pursuit by many churches is that it is devoid of the biblical foundation. It is based only on a half of the biblical calling for peace, unconditional love of God toward all of His children. The other half was missing, which is His holy, perfect nature, incapable of compromise and tolerance of any evil. In fact, it was not only intolerance of evil, it is God’s outright hatred of it. So much so, that He equated the intensity with which we love God to the intensity with which we ought to hate evil. This is His nature, this is who He is and His passion for us to be like Him (1 Peter 1:16) and to not to have anything in common with the world (James 4:4). God created us in His image and likeness, and after we betrayed all He gave us to the devil, He passionately saved us through His Son Jesus.

God’s gift of salvation through Jesus Christ is not only regaining our access to Him and restoration of our union with the Creator, but recapturing the power and authority He gave us and which we surrendered to Satan in the garden of Eden. To this end He gave us the weapons of spiritual warfare, not least among which is the sword of the Spirit, which is so often overlooked and underemphasized in the American church. After all, the sword is the offensive weapon, and how dare we offend anyone in our politically correct, self-centered, and spiritually shallow culture. We must use this weapon to fight for true unity with Jesus and, though Him, with one another. This fight is fears and costly. It will cost us selves; however, it is worth it. Loving God, hating evil and being desperate to honor and glorify Jesus Christ no matter what it costs us is the true unity around the truth of God, without compromise, without wavering, and without fear.

If My People...

2 Chronicles 7:14 is God’s checkpoint of how desperate we are for His presence and His glory to be revealed in our lives and nation. So often misquoted and misunderstood, this verse of Scripture is an appeal to the people God calls His own. This means us, believers and followers of Jesus Christ and not the secular world that rejects Him. “So what is it that He looks for? The elements of desperation to do something about the way things are”.³ The Bible is replete with the examples of such desperation.

Let’s look at the philistine giant who pushed the Israelite army into fear and desperation to use a kid who came to the battlefield with a lunch box. However, David turned the desperation of the grim circumstances into a desperate cry for and dependance on God:

And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid (1 Samuel 17:10-11).

David’s answer was simple; he saw his God work with His mighty power in desperate situations before. Both the lion and the bear were dead because of it. So, David was not arrogant, he was confident that his God answers to the heart laid bare in desperation:

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (1 Samuel 17:45).

We know how the story ended, Goliath joined the ranks of the lion and the bear that crossed David’s path. The desperate call for God brought the much-needed unity to Israeli army and Jewish people.

³ Mario Murillo, *Reaching a Critical Mass* (Martinez: Freshfire Communications, 2011), 21.

Similarly, Gideon desperately sought God after God's calling upon him to deliver Israelites from their enemy:

And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground (Judges 6:37-40).

Having ended up with only three hundred soldiers to face the Mediantes army of about 120,000. At that point Gideon's desperation for God turned into confidence that He would do the impossible and deliver the victory. It was contagious and the three hundred souls became the core of revival and peace in the land.

David and his men followed a similar trajectory when faced with the despair of losing their families into Amalekites' captivity:

So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God (1 Samuel 30: 3-6).

Facing the scourge and death threats from his brethren, David knew, in the very core of his soul, that he was not alone, that his God was with Him. Perhaps he recalled God's mighty triumph over Goliath. Maybe he went back to the time of his quiet walks with his Lord in the lonely valleys when shepherding the sheep. Whatever it may have been, David was desperate for God and found the resolve to encourage himself in the Lord.

The Lord answered. He directed David to pursue and destroy the enemy. Unexpectedly, David's men who wanted to stone him, changed their minds and followed David in this pursuit. David's desperation for God's glory and power to be revealed was irresistible even to those who opposed him, which changed the trajectory from division to unity in pursuit of the common goal of achieving freedom and deliverance from their enemy.

Worth the Fight

We must realize that the unity God desires will not come cheap nor will it be readily welcomed by all. The opposition is guaranteed. Despite its seeming attraction, God-centered unity is a difficult objective vehemently opposed by Satan. Divided and fractured body of believers is exactly what the enemy wants. It is no longer a threat to his poisonous and destructive work. However, nothing worth fighting for comes easy. We must be resolute and focused. We must ignore the noise that distracts us and become desperate enough that nothing will stop us in pursuit

of God's purposes. These heroes shine forth the standards of such tenacious resolve: David ignored his brother's derision at the prospect of him facing Goliath:

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

Gideon ignored the men of Ephraim who resented him and "said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply (Judges 8:1).

These and plethora of other examples also reveal that the unity among people in and of itself was not the ultimate goal of the pursuits. It was a by-product, and inevitable outcome that followed uncompromising devotion to the Lord, longing for His presence, and pursuit of His Glory with passion and desperation. To be truly united, we must act. Donning on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and picking up the sword of the Spirit, we must engage the enemy of our soul. We must wage the spiritual war "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Inaction will be our certain demise as Mario Murillo so powerfully stated: "Woe to those who say that if God wanted to move in our nation, He would just do it. The blood of a whole generation is on our hands if we walk away and pretend that the evil isn't there or that God does not want to use us. We are the ones He is looking at, not the blind helpless masses. We possess the responsibility and the privilege of displaying His everlasting love yet once more to a dying world".⁴

Conclusion

Jesus was emphatic about us being passionate for something as He said in Revelations 3:16. He hated lukewarm to a point that He, as conveyed in the original Greek, would "vomit" us out of His mouth if we continue our daily apathetic existence. God, who we claim to believe in, wants us to attach action to us faith, without which it is dead (James 2:14-26). He is looking for a different spirit, the likes of Caleb, whom the Master commended for faith and commitment to Him: ²⁴ But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it (Numbers 14:24). Let us be found as stand as one in the ranks of such heroes.

⁴ Mario Murillo, *Reaching a Critical Mass* (Martinez: Freshfire Communications, 2011), 23.

Bibliography

Murillo, Mario. *Reaching a Critical Mass*. Martinez: Freshfire Communications, 2011.

Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God*. Camp Hill, Christian Publications, 1993.