

Is Harmony Too Difficult?

Pastor Paul

HUMC

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Here is the state flag of Kentucky. There is a blue background and in the center are two men shaking hands. One is a pioneer dressed in what looks like khakis and the other is a statesman dressed in a dark blue suit. The motto reads: "United we stand, divided we fall."

And these same words could very well be the motto for our y, our church, our families, our neighbors and to the groups we belong to.

My text is Psalm 133:1-3.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when we live together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head. Running down upon the beard. Upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of

Zion. For there the Lord has commanded the blessing Life for evermore.

Back in Biblical days when pilgrims would come to worship in Jerusalem, they would begin to sing Psalms 121 -134 as they climbed the long steep hill to the temple. Psalm 133 was the next to last one as they walked through the doorway of the temple area.

When King David wrote this psalm, he had both positive and negative experiences with unity and harmony. It all started when he was a teenager, he slew Goliath the giant and you would think this great victory would unify the country, but it didn't.

When the women would come out of their villages to greet the army, they would dance and sing with tambourines, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten-thousands" and because of that little song, King Saul had become insanely jealousy and David ultimately had to flee for his life. Soon after a civil war gripped the entire country which had its roots in this original conflict.

After ten years of turmoil and instability, David finally became the next king, and now there is unity and peace. But as he sat on the throne, he recognized how precious and prized it was as he penned the words to this psalm.

As David wrote of this, he thought of Aaron's ordination as Israel's first high priest. When Moses poured the sacred oil over his head, it trickled down his beard all the way down the bottom hem of his priestly robe.

In the ancient Middle East, it was common to anoint a person's head with oil as a greeting as they entered a home. That sweet fragrance created a pleasant atmosphere of unity and harmony.

In verse 3, David then thought about the 9,200-foot snow covered Mt. Hermon which provided dew to the land. He saw it as an agent of renewal, refreshment and a fertilizing force. That is what harmony does.

Though Psalm 133 is only three verses, it speaks of the blessing of friendship, togetherness and abundance.

Psalm 133 again is: ***Behold how good and pleasant it is when we live together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down the beard, upon the beard of Aaron. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.***

When David wrote this psalm he began with the word, "Behold" which means "to take notice" or "What I am about to say is important" and knew how essential unity is in our lives.

There is a humorous story of some missionaries in the Philippines who began to play croquet in their front yard. While they played, several of their Agta Nagrito Indian neighbors watched and wanted to join in the fun.

The missionaries then explained how the game was to be played. Each person was given a mallet and a colored ball. As the game progressed, the opportunity came for one of the players to take advantage of one another and knock the ball out of play.

As the rules and strategies were explained, that only puzzled the Indians. One of them said "Why would I want to knock his ball out of bounds?" The missionary answered "So you can win." One short statured man, clad in only a loincloth, shook his head in bewilderment.

As the game continued, none of the Indians followed the missionary's advice. When a player successfully got through all

the wickets, the game was not over for him. He went back and gave aid and advice to his friends. As the final player went through the last wicket, the team happily shouted, "We won, we won."

In the Agta Negrito Indian society, competition is generally ruled out, especially when teamwork is needed to survive when they hunt and gather their food.

As Christian believers, the basis of our fellowship is unity in the spirit. If our churches worked like a game of croquet with its competition and strategy, we would have strife and dysfunction.

Now, don't get me wrong, part of the fun of croquet is competition, but when an unhealthy dose of it comes to the church or families, we should leave that aspect outside the door.

Christianity is to be lived out in the community. It is about getting along and making group decisions.

To do this, we must practice openness, honesty, respect and forgiveness.

On a humorous note, I remember a church near the one that I had pastored, decided to do some renovation. The big question was whether to have pews or chairs and it got to the point where people got so emotional about this, that there were hurt feelings and unfortunately there was no resolution. Friends for many years now on opposing sides. Some people left the congregation and started to attend ours over that issue. That is sad. Hopefully that will never happen to us

Unity and harmony are vital in the home. An example of a potential crisis took place was when a young ambitious man at the Amoco Oil company got a promotion that required a transfer to Cairo, Egypt.

That night, when he got home and said to his new wife and young baby. "Great news, we are moving. We are going to Cairo, Egypt. Isn't that exciting!"

Appalled, his wife said, "You are moving alone. I am going home to my mother." As you can imagine, there were a lot of fireworks that night with no apparent compromise.

Now if the husband gave up his promotion, he would resent his wife for ruining his career. But if the wife went along with the move, she would resent him for squashing her ideals for the baby and herself.

Fortunately, the husband and wife had a long discussion the next day, which required them to go back to fundamentals. They had to ask questions such as, "Is this my career or ours?" "Is this baby mine or ours?" "Are we individuals or do we operate as a team."

What eventually happened was the couple decided to make the move to Egypt, but to get to that point, there were serious discussions. And both husband and wife had to see each other's perspective. What is our part in creating harmony? Are we willing to explore other options? Are we high maintenance and difficult to get along with?

Do we make demands and must have our way? Do we sabotage or become passive aggressive?

Albert Einstein once said: Peace cannot be kept by force; it can be achieved by understanding.

But for us, to keep peace or unity in the home, in the church, or the neighborhood, it is often up to us. To create harmony, it takes work and we must:

- Be humble.
- Treat others with deference.
- Pray. Stay in the Word. Be close to God.
- Work through the issue and not throw up our hands.
- Separate the facts from the emotions.
- Don't call the police over minor or silly issues.
- Be open minded.
- Agree to disagree without being disagreeable.

Paul the Apostle wrote in **Ephesians 4:3³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

If all of us met Jesus as the Prince of Peace, he will help us find peace and unity in our souls, and then we can be instruments of his peace.

Unresolved conflict can hurt our witness and could hinder our testimony to others. But if we have unity, it is a beautiful picture for the community.

In the beginning, I showed you a picture of the state flag of Kentucky "United We Stand, Divided we Fall".

It takes hard work and perseverance to create unity and harmony. If someone has conflict, I would encourage you to pray and seek God's wisdom then make a phone call. Ask the Lord to help.

Desmond Tutu: If you want peace, don't talk to your friends, talk to your enemies.

May this week, we be that instrument of peace in our homes, neighborhoods and communities.

God bless.

