

Introduction:

- Where does **disharmony** come from? What is it that strangles **unity**? Where does **division, disharmony, & conflict** come from?
 - James 4.1 - our own sinful, selfish heart-desires
 - Consider gossip, assuming the worst in someone, slander, backbiting, unmet expectations, 'church-is-to-serve-me' mentality, biting remarks, impatience, anger, resentment, unforgiveness, pride, selfishness, absence from corporate worship, prayerlessness! *These ALL can contribute to DISUNITY and CONFLICT in a church.*

How can we dwell together in UNITY at CFBC?

1. remember **WHO WE ARE** -- saved children of God (our **identity**)
2. remember **WHO WE BELONG TO** --- the Living King! (our **Master**)
3. remember **WHERE WE'RE GOING** --- celestial glory (our **destiny**)
4. remember **OUR MAIN PURPOSE** --- preach the gospel (our **purpose**)
5. remember **HOW TO LIVE** -- humility & love (our **humility**)

A healthy church is not one where there is never any disagreement or conflict; But rather; the question is: *how* do those people *handle* disagreements & *resolve* conflict & *choose* to love & serve one another to the glory of Jesus!

Background to Phil 4:1-3

- Remember, in Phil 4.1 Paul gives the main, back-bond command: *Stand Firm in the Lord* -- vv.2-7 will flesh out ***HOW*** to do this!
 - If v.1 was *EDIFICATION*, v.2 is *EXHORTATION*, v.3b is *ANTICIPATION*
- Remember: the grand theme of Phil is **UNITY THRU SELFLESSNESS!**
 - See these themes come out in Philippians 1:27 & 2:1-4 & now 4:1ff.

I.DILIGENTLY PURSUE UNITY IN YOUR CHURCH! (2-3a)

- This immediate case concerns 2 women who cannot seem to get along.
- Conflict ever-present twin with those who are critical, proud, bitter, vengeful, hostile, unforgiving, angry, & selfish!

Philippians 4:2-3 — “URGENT: Preserve Unity & Here’s How To Do It!”

- “Even if a church has great doctrine, disunity robs a church of its power and destroys its testimony” (John MacArthur)

A. The Problem of Division**B. The Plea for Harmony**

✓ **NOTE:** Paul doesn’t ignore it, brush it aside, see it as ‘no big deal’. **INACTION** is a clear action of neglect, carelessness, and cowardice. > it leads to further division and disunity (and sin). What does Paul do?

What does it mean to “live in harmony”? [literally: “think the same way”]

C. The Provision God Gives

This all shows that even mature, faithful, committed Christians can become so selfish as to be caught up in controversy if they are not diligent to maintain unity!!

D. Pursue Unity -- *some pastoral suggestions*

1. Guard Your Thinking (*think what’s best, give them the benefit of the doubt*)
2. Choose to Love (*don’t let emotions lead you to react selfishly/foolishly/bitterly*)
3. Have the Conversation (*sit and work thru it; sit down, work through it together — humbly & patiently*)
4. Prioritize the Gospel (*is it a preference or an opinion; remember our common goal in laboring for the gospel!*)
5. Stay in Fellowship (*don’t stand aloof; don’t isolate self; don’t entertain a pity-party; don’t tell others & spread strife*)

Division & disunity is the playground of the Devil!
Let’s pursue unity w/ our eyes on Christ & His gospel!

II. ASSURE YOUR HEART IN YOUR HEAVENLY POSITION!

(3b)

Beloved CFBC flock: we cannot STRIVE TOO HARD for unity in the church. We have a sly enemy and deceitful hearts. And the *reputation of the gospel* and the *glory of Christ* is worth it! Let’s be DILIGENT to preserve unity here at CFBC!

12 ways to preserve unity, by Tim Challies

Here are twelve ways that you can repulse Satan’s attacks.

- #1. Spend more time considering evidences of grace in other Christians than you do pondering their sins and weaknesses.
- #2. Consider that spiritual safety comes through spiritual unity.
- #3. Meditate on God’s many commands demanding that we love one another.
- #4. Spend more time considering areas of agreement than disagreement.
- #5. Consider your peaceful God.
- #6. Renew in your mind and heart what it means to be at peace with God.
- #7. Meditate on the unique relationship between Christians. (Ps 133)
- #8. Count the cost of disunity.
- #9. Be the first to seek peace and reconciliation. You are a Christian today only because God was the first to seek peace with you. You are now called and equipped to be the first to seek after peace and to attempt to pursue and maintain unity. As you do this you have the high honor of acting as an imitator of God.
- #10. Walk and work together with other Christians as far as possible, making the Word the only judge of your actions.
- #11. Judge yourself more than you judge others. If you were to spend more time considering your own sin, and less time considering the sins of others, you would never be so quick to judge and to separate yourself from other true believers.
- #12. Pursue humility. Humility necessarily generates peace among Christians. Humility will prepare you to serve instead of be served, to overlook an offense, to pursue every kind of unity, to see others succeed where you fail, and to respond with joy and grace to every other possible source of disunity.

Unity is the best bond of safety in every church. (Thomas Brooks)

How to Preserve & Uphold Unity in the Church

By Thom Rainer

1. Make prayer and Scripture the focus of corporate gatherings
2. Preach and teach about church unity
3. Put others before yourself
4. Talk to people, not about people
5. Be a part of the change you want to see
6. Stand up for the leadership of the church
7. Be willing to not get your way if it means advancing the mission
8. Don’t compare your church to the one down the street or across town

A helpful evaluation: Am I promoting “UNITY” in my church?

What <u>Promotes</u> Unity?	What <u>Destroys</u> Unity?
faithful attendance prayer humility godly heart patience tolerance of one another forgiveness confrontation selflessness encouragement service/love overlook an offense choose to reach out to & serve those who may be different talking <i>to</i> people, not <i>about</i> people	gossip slander backbiting unmet expectations 'church-is-to-serve-me' mentality biting remarks impatience anger resentment unforgiveness pride selfishness absence from corporate worship prayerlessness talking <i>about</i> people, not talking <i>to</i> people

A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never
failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills
prevailing:
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with
cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving
would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of
God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should
threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to
triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for
him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to
them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who
with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Refrain

Summary:

Philippians 4:2-3 is not a naive request that all have perfect agreements on every points, every subject, every preference, and every opinion. Rather, Paul's point is appealing for a **mental attitude [thinking patterns/a disposition]* that adopts the same basic direction as other believers, that is, the same fundamental aim, the same orientation and the same fundamental priorities -- that is, a **GOSPEL orientation!** (D.A. Carson)