

Union with Christ

1

Corporate Union w/ Christ: Unity and Diversity

- Individual union with Christ implies corporate union with Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:1-16; 5:29)
- Union with Christ is the strongest tie Christians have to one another—sometimes it is just about the only tie. Two things follow:
 - There are many people in every local church who have almost nothing in common except Christ.
 - As a result of our mutual union with Christ, we shouldn't be willing to break Christian fellowship with those united to Christ even if we believe them to be in error or just because we don't like them.
 - This is not to be confused with suggesting that those with significant, yet still non-essential, differences, will be able to do every kind of ministry together.

2

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- The body of Christ is **objectively** characterized by diversity (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28-29).
- Furthermore, physical bodies, as an analogue to the church and the gifts within it, are diverse by default, having eyes, feet, hands etc. (Cor. 12:12).
- There is no New Testament expectation, however, that local instances of the body of Christ—churches—are to be particularly diverse beyond having both sexes, both the single and the married, people of different ages, weaker and stronger believers, people with different giftings and multiple socio-economic classes represented.
- Because of objectivity of the diversity within the body of Christ combined with the kind of diversity expected within individual local churches, in the vast majority of cases, it is generally misguided to seek to artificially diversify local churches.

3

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- Question: Should churches in the 21st century look like the community around them? Why or why not?
- However, at the same time, understanding the objective nature of the diversity of the body of Christ demands that there is nothing antithetical to the New Testament's expectation of diversity in a local church's practices.
- Scripture clarifies that shared unity with Christ does not at all imply that everyone possesses the same gifts or even measures of faith, but rather, the same (new) identity, promises and dignity/worth.
- Additionally, union with Christ does not imply that everyone lives an equally sinful or holy life.

4

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- Practically speaking, if we are uniting around something other than the Christ with whom we are united, then we are doing something that could go on just fine without the Gospel.
 - The danger of the "particular issue" church