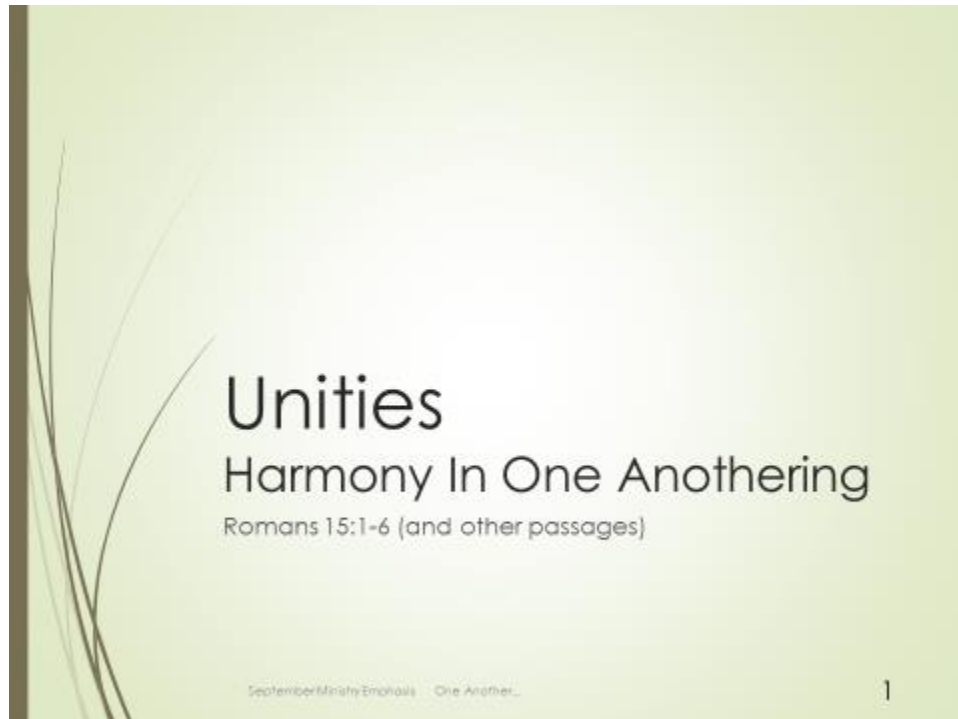
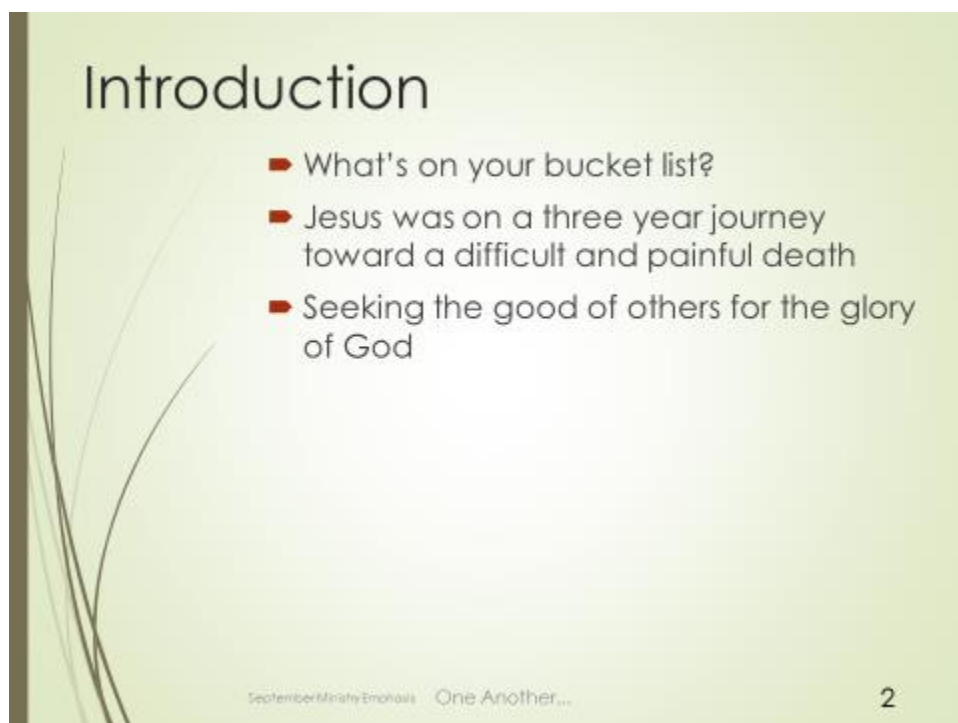


① [Slide 1. - Title]



① [Slide 2. - Introduction]



So what's on your bucket list? Maybe you've never written it down, but I believe we all have things we want to do, places we would like to see, and accomplishments to achieve before our lives end. Take a few moments to consider this "bucket list" kind of question. What would you do if you knew you only had 3 years to live?

Kent Hughes asks this kind of question in his commentary on Romans 15. If you were to create a list of all the things you wanted to do before you died, what would it look like? Would your list be more about places to see and things to do here on earth or would it be more about the people and ministry of Christ's kingdom? A recent movie called **The Bucket List** addressed this same idea. The basic plot revolves around two terminally-ill men who escape from a cancer ward and head out on a road trip with an expensive list of things to do before they die. Sadly, even the comedy and laughter can't hide the shallowness of a self-centered pursuit of pleasure and the hopelessness of a life without God.

While most of us are not facing a countdown to our last day on earth, there was one to whom which the question of what to do with the last three years of your life was not merely rhetorical. You see Jesus knew exactly where obedience to the Father led. As He started His ministry, He knew it was a three year journey toward a difficult and painful death. Yet we can observe from scripture that His bucket list was full of serving, teaching, and completing the work He had been given. And in His last few days on earth, He willingly poured out His life for the glory of God and for our sake.

How did he stay the course of serving and pleasing others over this time? I believe that in part, it was His extraordinary unity and oneness with the Father that kept Him focused on completing that work. Even as He prayed in the hours before His death, "Not my will, but Your will be done." You see Jesus' bucket list was all about doing the will of the Father and serving others. He set aside His rights as deity and accepted the role of a humble servant. He offered his righteousness and perfection and accepted the reproach and wrath of God on our behalf. His life of serving others meant not serving self and was an example that is meant to unite us all in seeking the good of others for the glory of God.

We have much to cover tonight as we continue our series on one anothering. So in the interest of time I'd like to quickly get to several texts this evening that speak to the unity we are to have in our one anothering, primarily looking at its application to ministry and leadership. So let's bow our hearts as we look to God's word this evening.

[opening prayer]

[Slide 3. Romans 15:1-6]

Our first passage drops us in at the end of Romans where Paul is giving instructions to the church. The first six verses of Romans 15 are near the end of his letter and continue his application of who we are to be in Christ. It is here in the last part of his letter where he focuses in on how it impacts our relationships with one another. In other words, Paul wants us to understand that the spiritual changes within us must change who we are; particularly in our relationships to others and how we live with one another in the body. As we read through this passage you will

see that it is packed full with practical truths to guide us toward unity and consideration of others as we follow the example of Christ. Turn to Romans Chapter 15 and follow along as I read verses 1 through 6.

“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Notice the repeated use of the word “please” in the first three verses. The emphasis here makes it clear that as true believers, God gives us a heart to please and prefer others by choosing not to please ourselves. In most of life’s decision, big and small, there is a choice to make in whom I will please. It is a choice of will, where I must value pleasing others more than I value pleasing myself. Well if you are anything like me, that’s not how our flesh works. Our sinful nature is fine with pleasing others so long as it pleases ourselves. And where we really have trouble is when pleasing others comes at the cost of pleasing ourselves. Yet, this is exactly what is in mind here in this passage.

① [Slide 4. Romans 15:1-6]

Romans 15:1-6

- We are to consider the example of Christ who bore the wrath of God for our sin upon himself
- When we place self at the center of the equation we sacrifice our unity
- When we seek our own pleasure and purposes and forget others, it is like the gears of the machine all trying to do their own thing

September Ministry Emphasis One Another... 4

Look at what Paul writes here to the church in Rome. First he says that we who have liberty and freedom in Christ are not to look down upon those who are bound by their conscience to live by rules and rituals. We are to seek the good of our neighbor, preferring, encouraging, and strengthening them in their faith. He reminds us that we are to consider the example of Christ

who bore the wrath of God for our sin upon himself. For if Christ left the indescribable glory of existence with the Father and Spirit to humble himself by taking on the reproach we deserved, how can we who have been given new life not follow after Him? And so like Him, we set aside our rights, our wants, and our privileges so that we may please others. In this way we reflect our unity with Christ and live out the Gospel before a lost world.

Paul ends this passage expressing what is either a prayer or his deep desire for the church. What is this desire? That the church, would live in a harmony that is characterized by such selflessness that it speaks with the unity of one voice to the glory of God. I truly believe that selflessness is a God-given grace that is like a spiritual oil lubricating the gears of ministry. Like a watch, all the many gears must work together in harmony so that it works as one and accomplishes its intended purpose of telling the time.

I believe it is important to note the connection that pleasing God and others, as well as bearing with the failures and sins of others has, to having unity and harmony in the church. When we place self at the center of the equation we sacrifice our unity. In working toward our own satisfaction and pleasure, we replace worship of God with a worship of self. It disconnects us from the body in a way that can be destructive to both ourselves and others.

When we seek our own pleasure and purposes and forget others, it is like the gears of the machine all trying to do their own thing. They grind against each other, working contrary to the design and so its function is impaired. So it is with the body of Christ. God designed the body to have many different parts. But by His design the diversity of those many parts work together in amazing harmony for the sake and unity of the whole.

📌 [Slide 5. 2 Cor. 13:11]

Our next passage drops us in at the end of 2 Corinthians where Paul is again giving final instructions to the church. Turn to 2 Corinthians Chapter 13 verse 11. Here you will find a verse that is also packed full of imperatives or commands to the church. Follow along as I read 2 Corinthians 13:11. *“Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”*

This passage is actually quite similar to the passage we just looked at in Romans. But what I see here are more specific instructions on what harmony in the church looks like. If we are looking to please one another and live in harmony, then this is what it will look like. In that sense, it is a list of those things we should be working toward in community, ministry, and all levels of leadership in the church.

① [Slide 6. 2 Cor. 13:11]



Paul gives five characteristics of a church that is working together in harmony. First, we are to rejoice together. We are to share in a joy over the lives and ministry that God has given us. Second, we must be ready to restore. That is we must overlook offenses, be poised to forgive faults, and be ready to right relationships; even when it costs us something to do so. Third, we must comfort one another. We are to be a community of healing, encouragement, and caring that enables and supports effective ministry.

Fourth, we are to agree with one another. The sense of this command is that we are to be like-minded or of the same mind. This doesn't mean that we will always be in agreement. But for the sake of unity we are oriented toward love, consideration, and care toward the body. We are to think the same way about doctrine, truth, and the work we do in ministry. Lastly, Paul says that we are to live in peace. Our lives and ministry are to be free of contention and strife. We will work to avoid complaining and conflict so that the church is characterized by acceptance and love.

A few years back, Michael Engle and I were heading out to have dinner together. He got in the car and as soon as he had settled in he said, "I got this great new CD you have to listen to." Now those of you who know me, know that I like nearly all forms of music. Jazz, rock, classical, blues are among the many styles I enjoy. But one style of music I'm really not that fond of is heavy-metal. And those of you who know Pastor Michael know exactly what kind of music was on the CD that he couldn't wait for me to listen to.

I say this to point out that we have many styles and preferences in the church. We have many personalities that play out as we work together in ministry. Those differences make us stronger, more vibrant, and a richer community. But that variety must work in a way that allows us to

function with one mission and one purpose as a church. Because of our love for Christ and each other Michael and I can share in joys, can give grace and comfort as needed, can be like-minded, and live in peace. And as hard as it is, I can even overlook his love for heavy-metal.

📌 [Slide 7. Col. 3:14]

The last passage I would like us to look at is Colossians 3:11-14. Turn there with me. Here Paul writes, *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**”*

📌 [Slide 8. Col. 3:14]

Col. 3:14

- Without a deep love for my brothers and sisters in Christ, we will never desire to serve them without self-interest first
- Just like music, harmony can only happen when each individual is willing to prefer others, play their given notes, and follow a leader
- What makes relationships and ministry work in the church, is a willingness to love and serve others at the expense of what we may want to do

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In verses 11 to 13 we have a list of characteristics of how we are to love in relationship to one-another. They are an important list and we do not have time to review these this evening. But I want us to hone in on verse 14. “And above all these put on love,” Paul says. Be kind; be humble, be patient, be forgiving; but more importantly let your love for one another be over all. Why is love so important? Because without a deep love for one another we will never desire to please each other. Without a deep love for my brothers and sisters in Christ, we will never desire to serve them without self-interest first. Without a Christ-like love we will never set aside our own wants and desires for the sake of others when it costs us much. Love binds our hearts together and brings with it a unity that leads us to work together. It brings together a diversity of people with a diversity of gifts to work everything together in a perfect harmony.

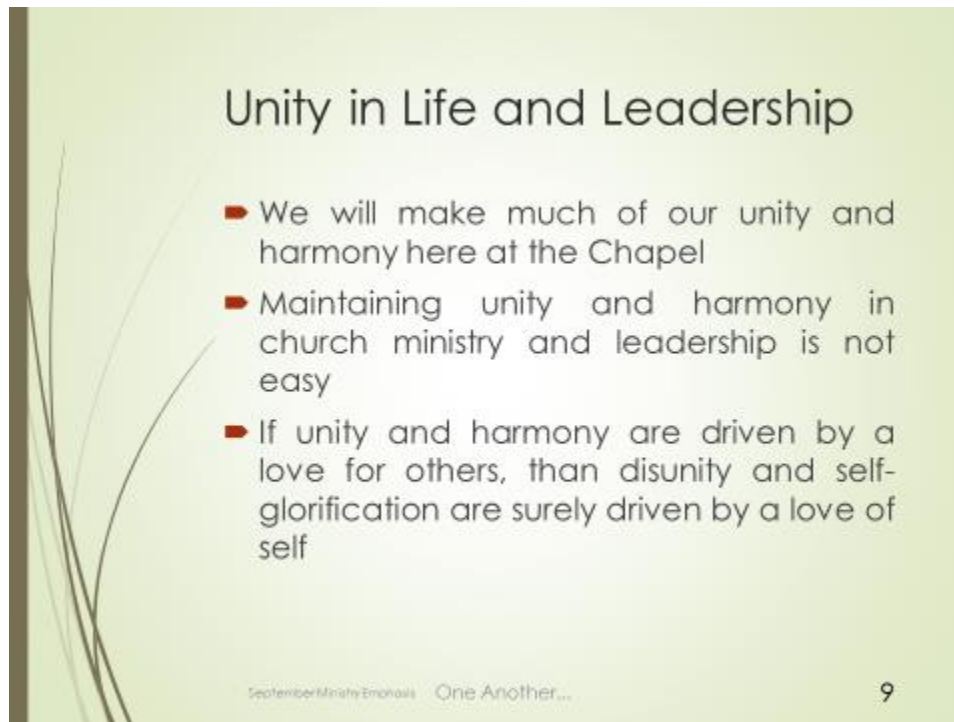
Music is a beautiful expression of unity and harmony. Imagine an orchestra playing a symphony with every instrument playing the exact same note. It would be boring and uninteresting. It is

the harmonies, the counter melodies, and the rhythms of the percussion, that join with the melody to make the symphony a beautiful expression of music; an expression so rich that it can thrill the hearts and delight the ear. And while each instrument has a unique tone, range, and quality that gives it a unique sound, it is the willingness of each musician to play the exact notes written by the composer and follow the conductor that makes it all work together.

It is no different in the body of Christ. Just like music, harmony can only happen when each individual is willing to prefer others, play their given notes, and follow a leader. Imagine what would happen if each instrument of the orchestra decided to play different notes than those that were written for each instrument. What if the drums decided they wanted to play the melody or the violins wanted to keep the rhythm? It would sound like a horrible mess. Even worse than a heavy-metal band.

You see, what makes relationships and ministry work in the church, is a willingness to love and serve others at the expense of what we may want to do. We daily lay our lives down for the sake of others. We follow the leadership of Elders, Deacons, and ministry leaders and contribute our gifts and abilities out of a love for God's people. We gladly accept our roles and responsibilities so that we may work together as one. We set aside differences that would divide because of our great love for Christ and one another. In doing so, we come together like a marvelous symphony for the glory of God. And in doing so we reflect a unity of purpose and harmony of gifts in a way that dazzles the lost and magnifies the power of the Gospel.

[Slide 9. Unity in Life and Leadership]



Unity in Life and Leadership

- We will make much of our unity and harmony here at the Chapel
- Maintaining unity and harmony in church ministry and leadership is not easy
- If unity and harmony are driven by a love for others, than disunity and self-glorification are surely driven by a love of self

September Ministry Emphasis One Another...

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Because the Bible makes much of our unity and harmony as we one-another in the church, we will make much of our unity and harmony here at the Chapel. It starts with the unity and harmony present in the Trinity. The three persons of the Godhead are in perfect community together.

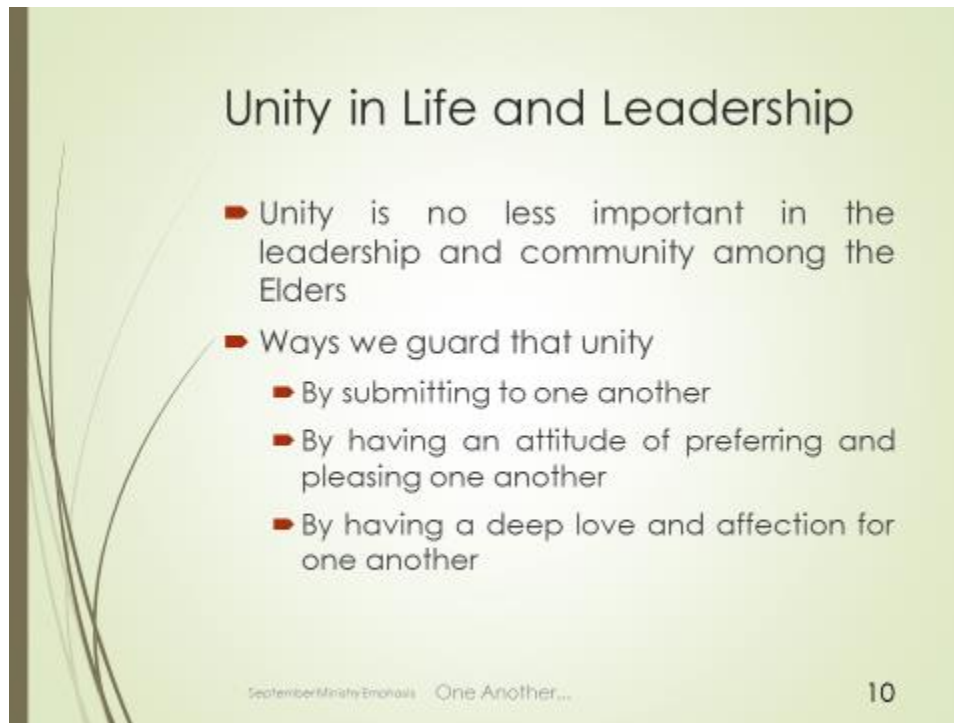
Therefore, under the headship of Christ, we as the body strive to live and work together to reflect that unity and harmony. We work at having a mindset of preferring and serving one another so that we can serve with one aim, while embracing our varied gifts and strengths in serving. And we trust that as our unity in community goes, so will go ministry leaders and teams who follow these same patterns of working toward love and harmony as we labor together for God's glory.

You see, our sinful natures wants to put ourselves and our desires at the center of everything. Even good desires can become divisive when we are willing to sin to make them happen or when they do not happen. That's because it is about taking the glory and worship that belongs to Christ and placing it upon myself. And when that happens it divides and disrupts our relationships. Unity and harmony are lost. We push and manipulate to get what we want, when instead we should be working together in the body for the sake of our unity. We desire attention and control so that things go the way we want, rather than desiring harmony and peace in the body of Christ. And we selfishly promote our own agendas, preferences, and opinions, rather than preferring one-another, granting grace and forgiveness for the sake of others.

Maintaining unity and harmony in church ministry and leadership is not easy. It goes against our sinful flesh. It flows against the currents of culture in an age where selfies are all the rage. We want to do things our way. We want to exercise our rights; even in smallest ways. We want others to not just listen to our opinion, but for it to rule. And when we make ministry about ourselves, our wants, our opinions, it's just a real-life selfie for others to see. But from a spiritual perspective, it's not a very pretty picture.

For the believer, whether in ministry or in our lives, it should be all about others and Christ. Instead of wanting everyone to focus on me or seeking the affirmation I can get from others, it should be about getting others to focus on Christ. And I don't need to see how many "likes" I can get on a Facebook selfie to seek the attention of others. Facebook didn't invent the selfie. It merely provided another medium for us to put the focus upon ourselves. Seeking self-glorification has been around since the fall of man. And if unity and harmony are driven by a love for others, than disunity and self-glorification are surely driven by a love of self. Unity will come when we are more concerned about making much of Christ and others than we are concerned about making much of ourselves.

① [Slide 10. Unity in Life and Leadership]



Unity in Life and Leadership

- Unity is no less important in the leadership and community among the Elders
- Ways we guard that unity
 - By submitting to one another
 - By having an attitude of preferring and pleasing one another
 - By having a deep love and affection for one another

September Ministry Emphasis One Another... 10

Unity is no less important in the leadership and community among the Elders. Though Elders, we are still men who are sinners saved by grace. We have faults, flaws, weaknesses, and differing opinions that without Christ would make it impossible to lead with unity and harmony. And so we work hard at guarding that unity because it is something we treasure as a precious jewel. We understand the potential for division around sensitive or controversial decisions. Any of us can get defensive over our own ministries and agendas. But if we let our guard down over one issue, we open the door for a division that could distract and harm the ministry of the Chapel.

At a practical level, there are several ways we guard that unity. First, we operate as a plurality of Elders where each man serves the Elder body as a whole. In other words, we agree to submit to one another. As Pastor of Worship, I have oversight of Worship and Music under the authority of the Elders as a whole. No Elder is free to simply do whatever they want in their ministry. We are bound to each other and the guidelines for that ministry that have been agreed to. This serves to keep us aware of the overall ministry of the Chapel and allows input and direction to come from the Elders as a whole. When an Elder moves a ministry in a new or different direction, you can be assured he is speaking with the one voice and the affirmation of all the Elders. We act and speak as one.

Second, we guard our unity by having an attitude of preferring and pleasing one another. This does not always come easy. We are often distracted by both our strengths and our weaknesses. Our passions and gifting will naturally lead us to think about things in a particular way. But as we deliberate and discuss, God has always granted unity to us as we begin to see the issue from all sides and as the process of preferring and pleasing one another works in our hearts. In my time as an Elder there have been a number of occasions where I have sat back and thought, there is no way we are going to agree on this unless God does something among us. But our God who is

always faithful works in our midst bringing unity, harmony, and great joy as we marvel at His work among us.

Lastly, we guard our unity **by having a deep love and affection for one another**. While I have not served on other church leadership teams, I can tell you from conversations with many others that the united and caring style of leadership we enjoy as Chapel Elders is something not often found, even in church leadership. As Elders we are not just co-laborers or worse, adversaries competing in ministry. We are brothers, united by our love for Christ and His people. We serve you with a love and affection that is probably not communicated often or clearly enough. But it flows through a great love for one another that draws us closely together. Our prayers and meetings are often sprinkled with tears. And while we may oddly be referred to as the crying Elders, it reflects our unity in the love we have for you and for one another.

📌 [Slide 11. - Reflect and Respond]



As we close this evening I'd like to encourage you to reflect and respond to this message in three ways. I trust that as you hear God's word and its instructions for our unity, it is something you desire and treasure. It may not always be easy, but it must be something we always work at. Unity and harmony are essential for the church. Not just because they reflect the unity and harmony found in the community of the Godhead. But because it is God's good and perfect design for relationships in the body of Christ. It reflects our love for Christ and for one another. It yields peace and is a powerful picture of the Gospel at work among us. And it allows the work of ministries to flow smoothly and more effectively for the glory and kingdom of our Lord.

So first, let me encourage you to **be watchful over our unity and harmony**. This means that you must examine your own heart and motives as you interact in community with the body. Are your relationships more about drawing attention to yourself, your situation, or your agenda? Are you

reflecting and submitting to the desires and goals of those who lead you in ministry or do you think that you know better? Are you considering others and other ministries rather than yourself or your ministry? Be watchful and guard yourself against these sinful tendencies. In doing so you will find the beauty of unity and harmony that is intended in the body of Christ.

Second, let me remind you to be thankful for our unity and harmony. Thankfulness and gratitude are fruits of humility. When we see others as better than ourselves we are more likely to be content with our own situations. We are more likely to prefer others when we are grateful for all that God has done for us. Let me ask you a few tough questions. Are you more prone to complain about others or to thank God for them? Do you tend to grumble about life and ministry or are you glad for the opportunity to serve? Do you find yourself getting angry or frustrated when decisions don't go your way or are do you rejoice at the opportunity to please others? And once a decision is made, do you support and submit to that decision or do you go around telling others how bad and senseless it was? Be thankful and encourage others do the same. In doing so you will find joy and peace in a grateful heart that is pleasing to God.

And lastly, please be prayerful for our unity and harmony. We are to be people who pray for one another. Not just over health concerns or trials of life. But for affection and unity in our lives as believers. I'm not talking about praying for God to change so-and-so's heart because they have no idea how awful heavy-metal music is. I'm talking about praying over our own hearts and for our leaders here at the Chapel. Too often our prayers are all about us and not about Christ and the church. Pray for our unity; that we would all be one in our desire to live for God and His glory. Pray for harmony; that we would appreciate and respect each other's gifts and use them with consideration and submission as we live in community together. And pray for all of your Elders; that we would be united around Christ and this ministry as we lead, teach, and love His people. In doing so you will strengthen your faith as you participate in the blessings of all that God is doing in our midst.

Perhaps there are some this evening that this message has convicted. I encourage you to acknowledge and confess any sin or failure that works against our unity. Seek those out whom you have worked against and ask for forgiveness. Commit to changing tonight and begin to work less at pleasing yourself and more at preferring others. If you are at odds with someone in ministry or the Elders over direction or decisions, don't hold on to feelings of frustration and discontent. Harboring and dwelling on these thoughts will only lead to bitterness and sin. God calls us to live in unity with one another. We are to be a community where love and harmony are so evident that the only explanation is Christ's presence and power among us. May this be true of us here at the Chapel. Not that we may boast in what we have done. But that we may boast, that Christ and the cross have done what we could never do.

Let's close in prayer.

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