

main united when we disagree on matters of opinion or human judgment is a separate matter and is not properly within the scope of what has traditionally been referred to as "unity in diversity." Let us not confuse terminology and thus open doors to error.

Third, all decisions on unity must be decided personally or congregationally, not nationally or by some individual Christian or association of Christians for all other Christians. We are not bound to a human creed or human consortium. We appeal solely to Christ as our Head. We must never forget what we teach concerning: (a) the imperative responsibility of each Christian to act from his/her own open investigation of the Word of God; and (b) the auton-

omy of local congregations to act independent of outside oversight or intimidation. We should allow the Lord to decide whether we are united spiritually with those outside the sphere of our activity or influence. Generally, I am united with all whom God accepts and I am pleased to share spiritual relationship with anyone who is in good standing with the Lord. Specifically, fellowship is at issue when I meet a situation in which my life, responsibility, or influence is engaged and I must make a decision regarding what or with whom I will share active relationship. May God bless us with a spirit of wisdom and understanding that we may meet our grave responsibilities in this area of our spirituality! — Guardian of Truth, January 2, 1992

"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."
—
John 17.21

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre.
Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ
8490 James M Harvell Rd
Navarre, FL 32566

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Assembly Schedule
Sunday

Bible Class for all ages 9:00 AM
Morning Worship Service 10:00 AM
Evening Worship Service 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages 7:00 PM

VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

If you know of someone who would like to receive this publication, please let us know.

For a free Bible correspondence course by mail, call us.

NAVARRE MESSENGER

Unity Through Restoration



"Unity through restoration" is a phrase which Christians have used to describe agreement to share spiritual relationship and activity based upon mutual understanding and acceptance of truth as taught in the Scriptures. "Restoration" is a word we have adopted to signify the recovery of first century faith and practice in later centuries. We unashamedly believe that the faith and practice of Christians in the first century,

when recorded in the New Testament with Divine approval, forms the pattern for God's people until Christ returns (1 Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; 3:10,14; Tit. 1:9; 2 Jn. 9-11).

"Unity in diversity," on the other hand, is a phrase which has been used to identify agreement to share spiritual relationship and activity while disagreeing on what

the Bible teaches about mutually shared items of faith and practice. The phrase often describes denominational acceptance of totally divergent and even contradictory positions considered significant enough to separate people into different "fellowships" or denominations. Baptists and Methodists, for example, consider one another Christians and share some activities (such as Easter sunrise services). They recognize

that their faith and practice are sufficiently different to keep them from being together, yet they claim to be united. The phrase has also been used to call for the uniting of those who hold differing views in "Christian churches" and "churches of Christ." For example, advocates of "unity in diversity" want those who believe in using mechanical instruments of music in worship to join with those who do not, working and worshiping together in spite of their differences.

I have been asked to discuss which of these two approaches is biblical when we confront questions concerning divorce and remarriage.

Unequivocally, I affirm that biblical unity on any question about which God has spoken must be based upon what God says. It cannot be based upon man's reasoning (Jer. 10:23). Amos rhetorically asked, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3) "Walking together" indicates mutual, shared activity. If I am involved in an activity with another, I must agree, at least in that activity, or violate conscience by participation. In spiritual matters the basis of agreement must be the Word of God (Matt. 15:8-9).

Jesus prayed that all Christians "may be one" in God and in Christ just as he had prayed that those who were with him should be one (Jn. 17:20-21). How were the apostles one? The answer is in his prayer: "You gave them to Me and they have kept Your word" (v. 6); "They have known that all things which You have given Me are from You" (v. 7); "I have given to them the words

which You have given Me and they have received them" (v. 8); "keep though Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (v. 11); "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name" (v. 12); "I have given them Your word" (v. 14); "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (v. 17); "for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth" (v. 19). There is no question that Jesus taught unity upon compliance with the word of God.

One asks, however, "But what about divorce and remarriage?" Two very direct references settle that in my mind. First, when answering questions about divorce and remarriage, Jesus asked, "Have you not read. . . ?" (Matt. 19:4) Jesus called for a "restoration" of the will of God in their practice by leading them back to the Word. He expected them to read, draw proper conclusions, and then apply God's word to their questions. Second, when the disunited Corinthians needed answers to their questions concerning husbands and wives, they knew to go to God's word. They wrote Paul who was a messenger for Christ. Paul responded with the commands and counsel of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:1-40). He did not call for unity on grounds other than "that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10). Some might say, "But Paul gave his own judgment in some of his statements on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7." A careful reading of the text will clearly show that where Paul expresses his

judgment it is either apostolic judgment guided by the Holy Spirit (vv. 25,40) and/or an admonition to follow a safe course in matters left to human decision (vv. 26-28). In either case, "serving the Lord without distraction" is primary (v. 36). The overriding concern of the chapter is: What does God say for us to do?

We must acknowledge at this point some biblical guidelines which are essential to "unity through restoration" and which are most helpful in applying this great principle to issues related to divorce and remarriage:

First, Christians make decisions about fellowship or unity in keeping with the following clear instruction: (a) we must preach and defend the Truth as revealed by God in the New Testament (2 Tim. 4:1-5); (b) we must not teach error or sin (Gal. 1:6-10); (c) we must not practice anything we believe to be sin (1 Tim. 5:22; Matt. 15:1-14); (d) we must not condone or support error or sin in others (2 Jn. 9-11; 1 Cor. 5; Rev. 2:12-29); (e) we must not be hindered from accomplishing all which God expects of us (Matt. 7:21,24-27; Jas. 4:17; 2 Cor. 8:7; 13:7-11).

Second, some issues can be decided by appeal to Scripture. In these, intense study and reflection upon God's Word is often required. We must be uncompromising where God has spoken but we must also be patient, kind and loving (Eph. 4:13; Col. 3:12-17) with those still in the process of learning. We are all still studying some subjects. Some other issues are not answered in Scripture and still others call for human judgment. To agree to re-

Living Life the Hard Way



by David King

"Good understanding gains favor, but the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

The goal of every human being is happiness. But few ever find that happiness. Many culprits get blamed for that failure, but in most cases, the reason is sin. We violate God's law, and pay the price for our decision. The irony here is that we ignore God's way because it's too much trouble, but the "easy" path we choose ends up costing us much more.

Whether we realize it or not, we have chosen to live life the hard way. Sin is the ultimate con artist. It offers glittering promises of pleasure; but only after we take the bait do we realize we've been had.

Oh, there may be an initial spasm of excitement, but the fun is only temporary. The pleasure

is soon replaced with pain, as the real harvest comes in: health problems, broken relationships, financial ruin, emotional trauma. In the end,

we learn to our everlasting regret that we chose poorly. The way of the unfaithful is, in fact, quite hard.

Even after we realize we have made a mistake, we often compound the problem by trying to avoid the consequences of our error. Some folks, for example, try to mask the first sin with other sins (look at King David's clumsy attempts to cover his sin with Bathsheba). Others look to science or legal maneuvering to lessen sin's impact (think of the gay lobby's efforts to legitimize their immoral lifestyle). Others simply redefine the sin as something other than sin, thereby perpetuating the notion that there is really no problem (alcoholism, gossip, pride). Ultimately, none of these denial strategies will accomplish what the sinner is looking for. In fact, in many cases, these strategies only make matters worse. Satan will not be cheated.

The best way to avoid the consequences of sin is obvious: quit sinning. Notice in our text that "the way of the unfaithful" is contrasted with "good understanding." The first step in living right is to develop a healthy understanding of how God wants us to live. This is not a matter of merely memorizing Scripture. Rather, it is opening our eyes to recognize the cause-and-effect principles that govern this world in which we live.

Bible study is a good start, but also study the mistakes and successes of others. Try to understand the immutable connections between behaviors and outcomes, and live so as to achieve the best outcomes, rather than being guided by the whims of the moment.

Admittedly, in some cases the consequences of sin cannot be removed. Some sins in our past leave scars that will never go away, and we'll have to live with them the rest of our lives. But at least we can stop adding to the pain, and perhaps even lessen it.

Of course, the best course of action is to not sin in the first place. Resolve at an early age to serve God with all your heart, mind, and body, and learn the self-discipline necessary to make that commitment stick. It will require some sacrifices, and there will likely still be some rough patches. But in the end you will find the happiness that you seek.

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