

I Believe in the Unity of All Believers

Part 1

I attended Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky. I was eighteen years old when I began college, and to be honest I had some Church of God pride at the time. Asbury started out as a Methodist school but later became a non-denominational school. Most of the students and professors were from various denominations rather than from the Church of God. So I went there with a chip on my shoulder wondering if people outside of the Church of God could teach me very much. What I learned was that there are a lot of godly people outside the Church of God. My time at Asbury was a very influential time in my life and I learned a lot about living for Christ by the professors and the students who were there.

What I learned at Asbury was what is taught in the New Testament, namely, that through Christ all believers are united. Actually, this is the message of the Church of God: there is only one body made up of saved members. I would like to share a few of the reasons why the church is one even though sometimes we don't manifest that unity in the world.

First, we are united by a common salvation. The Apostle Paul wrote, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3.26-28). Notice that three times Paul uses the word "all," which affirms that we are all part of the same body. In spite of differences in race ("Jew nor Greek"), class ("slave nor free"), or gender ("male nor female"), we are one in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ does not erase our differences. Yet, when I love Jesus and you love Jesus, our differences don't divide us. We have unity in spite of our diversity.

Secondly, we are united by a common mission. That mission was given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was to make disciples of all nations (see Matt 28.18-20). This mission is the same for all believers. We don't decide what our mission is as a church; the Lord has already decided that for us. And when we work together as a church to accomplish a common mission, it promotes unity. It's hard to fight when we're serving together. Think about the Los Angeles Lakers. There are black guys on this team and white guys. There are Europeans and Americans. Yet, they function as one team to accomplish one goal: to win a NBA championship. We too should be united by our common mission.

This holds true for other churches as well. Remember, we're on the same team. If another church or denomination in our area is doing well, we should rejoice. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Their success is our success, for we are all in this together (see Phil 1.15-18).

Lastly, we are united by a common destination. Ephesians 4.4-6 reads, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one

Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Notice that Paul says that we are all called to “one hope.” That hope is the hope of eternal life. As believers, we’re all going to the same place. We share the common destiny of eternal life. So if we’re going to worship together then, why not do it here on earth? Why wait until heaven before we join together? Let’s manifest on earth the unity we already possess in Christ.

Pastor Mark