

Unity Through Love

The theme of the 2018 National Day of Prayer is unity. The Unity theme is based on Ephesians 4:3, which reads: *“Making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* The National Day of Prayer focus is hope for a peaceful world, nation and community as we work in harmony with others.

Unity is about respecting others and appreciating their uniqueness. It is not about “sameness” or “uniformity.” God made only one you, just as He made each person in His creation to be unique. No two people are alike, yet when we combine the uniqueness and talents of other people everyone can contribute in their own way. The familiar verse from 1 Corinthians talks about the one body of Christ, made up of many parts – each with a different function. I have included the entire verse below but I want to highlight verse 18, which says: ¹⁸ *But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.* To me that says that God has specifically placed each of us where He needs us and we can best contribute to the overall effort. Uniqueness is His design.



Unity is about loving others in spite of their differences. God’s objective is to grow the Kingdom through people working together in love. The teachings of Jesus are based on love. When we love others we acknowledge their specialness. We seek the good in others because they are creations from God. With that in mind, now apply the love to people in our community, nation and world. Too often we focus on the negative and the differences of people. As a result, it is much more difficult to work together for a common goal. Seeking to view the positive in people will make a world of difference.

Our family has hosted international guests over the years. One of those is Janela Cevallos. Janela is in the ministry in Quito, Ecuador, where our church sends a mission team every year. Janela stayed in our home for several months while interning at our church and the YMCA. It gave us great joy to learn about her culture and she was eager to learn about ours. Although each culture may do things differently, at the core of each of us is a genuine love for each other. We have established life-long relationships with Janela as a result. Through her we have a feeling of unity with the Ecuadorian people.

You can be a catalyst for unity with others, too. Let us unite as people of God. Let us celebrate what makes each person special and how God has uniquely gifted each person. Let us work together unified as the many parts of the one body of Christ.

The Bible Says: *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by ¹⁴ one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treated with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-30).