



**Unified Around Our Vision
February 18 & 19, 2023**

Matthew 6:22-23 (TPT)

“The eyes of your spirit allow revelation-light to enter into your being. If your heart is unclouded, the light floods in! But if your eyes are focused on money, the light cannot penetrate and darkness takes its place. How profound will be the darkness within you if the light of truth cannot enter!”

John 17:20-21 (GW)

“I’m not praying only for them. I’m also praying for those who will believe in me through their message. I pray that all of these people continue to have unity in the way that you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they may be united with us so that the world will believe that you have sent me.”

How can I do my part to unify our church around God’s vision?

I’m commissioned by Jesus to do everything possible to:

- **Preserve unity**
- **Protect fellowship**
- **Promote harmony**

Glorify God through worship.

Relate to everyone through fellowship.

Act like Jesus through discipleship.

Care for others through ministry in your church.

Express God’s love through the mission of sharing the Gospel.

How We Can Unify Our Church Around God’s Vision:

1

Focus on our commonness, not our differences.

Romans 14:19 (Phillips)

So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of one another’s character.

What do we have in common?

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NLT)

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

- **We are one body**
 - Jesus wants the entire church to do His work.
- **We are one spirit**
 - Jesus gives every believer His Holy Spirit.
- **We have one hope**
 - Jesus will return.
- **We have one Lord**
 - We worship only one Savior.
- **We have one baptism**
 - We only get baptized once.
- **We have one God**
 - There is only one triune God.

Unity is not uniformity, God loves diversity; He made us all different.

What about Christians who drive me crazy?

Romans 14:1 (MSG)

Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with - even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

2 Steps:

1. Ask yourself, "Am I the issue?"
2. Stop asking "What's wrong with you?" and start asking, "What happened to you?"

1 Corinthians 1:10b (LB)

...Let there be real harmony so that there won't be splits in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

2

Realize I must continually work at unifying my church.

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT)

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Divisive Actions to Avoid:

- **Don't bring worldly values into the church.**
 - **Idolizing celebrities: Long on reputation and short on character.**

1 Corinthians 3:2-5a (TLV)

“You're acting (in the church) the same way unbelievers act in the world! The proof of your immaturity is your arguing and quarreling and the divisions you've created.” That proves you still belong to the world and are living by worldly values! When one of you says, I support Paul, and another says I support Apollos, you're acting like unbelievers, not like Christ.”

- **Don't get sucked into the world's conflict.**
 - **Polarizing political views: Let go of politics if it is polluting the Gospel.**

John 18:36a (NIV)

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders.”

What do I do with internet / social media trolls?

2 Timothy 2:23-25 (NLT)

Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth.

Romans 14:20 (NLT)

Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble.

3

Develop realistic expectations.

Psalms 119:96 (LB)

Nothing is perfect except your words.

- * **Nothing works perfectly on this planet, including my church.**
- * **A church can be healthy without being perfect.**
- * **Even with all our failures, Jesus passionately loves His church.**
- * **Love the real church, not the ideal church.**

Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Reconciliation, rather than running away, is always the mature approach.

Colossians 3:14 (LB)

Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony.

1 Peter 4:8 (MSG)

Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything.

4

Offer encouragement instead of criticism.

Romans 14:19-20a (MSG)

So let's agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other. Help others with encouraging words; don't drag them down by finding fault.

Learn to confront an issue in a positive way.

“Positivity persuades people to do positive things.”

Proverbs 16:21 (GNT)

A wise, mature person is known for his understanding. The more pleasant his words, the more persuasive he is.

- I am never persuasive when I'm abrasive.
- Telling it like “it is” doesn't change anybody, but telling it like it “can be” does.

Romans 14:4 (CEV)

What right do you have to criticize someone else's servants? Only their Lord can decide if they are doing right, and the Lord will make sure that they do right.

Romans 14:10 (Philipps)

Why, then, criticize your brother's actions, why try to make him look small? We shall all be judged one day, not by each other's standards or even our own, but by the standard of Christ.

When I sit in God's position of judging other believers, four realities happen:

1. I lose fellowship with God.
2. I expose my own pride and insecurity.
3. I set myself up for God's judgment.
4. I harm the fellowship of believers.

My Choices:

- Live a self-centered life.
- OR**
- Live a Christ-centered life.

Galatians 5:13-15 (TPT)

Beloved ones, God has called us to live a life of freedom. But don't view this wonderful freedom as an excuse to set up a base of operations in the natural realm. Constantly love each other and be committed to serve one another. For all the law can be summarized in one grand statement: "Demonstrate love to your neighbor, even as you care for and love yourself." But if you continue to criticize and come against each other over minor issues, you're acting like wild beasts trying to destroy one another!

1 Peter 3:8 (NIV)

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

What my church needs from me:

1. Empathy

- Care for the hurting in our church family.

2. Compassion

- Get involved in the Center of Hope.

3. Humility

- Start serving and get in a small group.

John 17:24 (TPT)

"Father, I ask that you allow everyone that you have given to me to be with me where I am! Then they will see my full glory—the very splendor you have placed upon me because you have loved me even before the beginning of time."



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