

It's Your Time!
TIME TO UNITE
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"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." Philipians 2:1-3 NIV

*1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.** 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all. Ephesians 4:1-6 NLT*

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ... 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." ... 6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them." Genesis 11:1-6 NIV

Unity is absolutely critical for the future of our church. It is important for families to be united. It is important for staff to be united. Unity is so important. It makes all the difference for success. The enemy's plan is to divide and conquer the church, to divide and conquer families. Today's message is an inoculation against the attack of the enemy so we can stand against it.

God has blessed this church because we fight for unity.

Unity = harmony or being in one accord.

1. IT PLEASES THE LORD. ...When we do well together...when we get along...when we are unified.

Nothing is harder for parents than when siblings fight among one another. Sometimes, you have to initiate conflict in a godly way to get to a place of peace. To ignore a situation of conflict is simply to acquiesce. Sometimes you have to work hard to get to a place of unity. God disciplines those He loves because He knows it is best for us to be in unity and harmony with one another.

We have to know how to handle things in a godly way, especially if there ever comes a time when you need to leave a church. Close the door the right way. Be sure to handle

your exit well, so you can enter well, so that you can be a healthy part of your new church. If you are at HCWO and didn't leave your old church well, if you participated in gossip, if your heart was not in the right place, go back and make it right. Write a letter: Ask for forgiveness. Say thank you. Leave them with a blessing. Bless, and do not curse.

God is pleased when we live together in unity.

*"May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in **complete harmony** with each other, **as is fitting** for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with **one voice**, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:5 NLT*

There'll be times when you need to be patient with others and you'll need encouragement to persevere. Jesus will give you the patience and the encouragement that you need.

*"...live in **such harmony with one another**, in accord with Christ Jesus..."
Romans 15:5 ESV*

It is important that we work hard at being like-minded, that we think alike. When there is disagreement, handle it well. No one comes with the intention of disagreeing. The enemy likes to drive a wedge between us. We need to learn to be like-minded.

The story of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, illustrates how destructive disunity can be among God's people, and how greatly disunity displeases (even angers) God.

***1**One day Korah son of Izhar, a descendant of Kohath son of Levi, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben. **2**They incited a rebellion against Moses, along with 250 other leaders of the community, all prominent members of the assembly. **3**They united against Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! The whole community of Israel has been set apart by the Lord, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than the rest of the Lord's people?"*

***18**So each of these men prepared an incense burner, lit the fire, and placed incense on it. Then they all stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle^c with Moses and Aaron. **19**Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all gathered at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community, **20**and the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, **21**"Get away from all these people so that I may instantly destroy them!"*

***22**But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground. "O God," they pleaded, "you are the God who gives breath to all creatures. Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?" **23**And the Lord said to Moses, **24**"Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."*

***25**So Moses got up and rushed over to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, followed by the elders of Israel. **26**"Quick!" he told the people. "Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don't touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins." **27**So all the*

people stood back from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents, together with their wives and children and little ones.

31He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them. **32**The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the men, along with their households and all their followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned. **33**So they went down alive into the grave, along with all their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished from among the people of Israel. Numbers 16:1-33 NLT

The Lord is not pleased with disunity. His blessing is withheld. John Maxwell, one of the greatest leadership writers of our time, wrote in his book *Partners in Prayer* “the number one reason churches, organizations and businesses do not succeed is because there is no unity.”

Jesus said “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Mark 3:25

2. UNITY COMMANDS A BLESSING/FAVOR OF GOD.

*“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. **For there the Lord bestows his blessing,** even life forevermore.”*

Psalm 133:1-3 NIV is A Psalm of Ascent (A Pilgrimage song sung on the way to Jerusalem to worship.)

Unity has a **fragrance** like God’s anointing. Where there is unity it smells good, it is fragrant. Disunity stinks.

Unity is **refreshing** (indeed life-giving) like the snows of Mount Hermon and the cold streams that flow from it. Unity commands the favor and blessing of God.

*“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were **all with one accord** in **one place.**” Acts 2:1 KJV*

That day the Church was born there were 120 people all with **one heart** and **one mind**, **one agenda**, **one focus**. The Holy Spirit came upon them in power and somewhere between 5000 and 15,000 came to Christ that day. Miracles, signs and wonders come out of unity.

“Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.”
1 Peter 3:8 NLT

One heart. One mind. One purpose. United in beliefs and doctrine, united in purpose. Unity is hard to come by and must be protected.

3. UNITY IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR.

“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” Ephesians 4:3 NLT

Sow into unity. Cultivate it. Protect it. Let’s be known for our unity.

Get wrapped up in the right stuff. Be bound to one another with peace and unity.

How should we handle ourselves?

1. **Guard your heart** for it is the wellspring of life. Guard your heart against offense, hurt, bitterness and grudges, or the urge to defend yourself. Go to God and ask for His help to keep you heart clean.

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23

There’ll be times when you want to defend yourself, but guard your heart. The best stuff doesn’t come out when we’re offended.

2. **Scrub your motives**. Make sure there is no selfish agenda and your motives are pure. Is my motivation right? Am I doing the right things for the wrong motives?

23Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24

3. **Fight through differences to the point of unity**. Work through your differences. Connect on the heart level. Don’t give up on people or situations. Your best time can come out of fighting for unity. This can bring us to a place of growth and blessing.

There is no magic pixie dust. 2012 is OUR TIME, OUR TIME TO UNITE, but we have to be willing to work hard to fight through to the point of unity.

Questions for consideration and discussion:

1. Take time as a group to discuss Ephesians 4:1-6 line by line focusing on how each element contributes to the unity of the body of Christ.

2. Are there any areas of conflict **in your family life** that you need to work through to a place of unity?

- Are there any areas of conflict **in your work life** that you need to work through to a place of unity?
- Are there any areas of conflict **in your mini-church** that you need to work through to a place of unity?
- Are there any areas of conflict in your relationships **in the church** that you need to work through to a place of unity? (CAUTION: This is a time to ask for help and not to spawn gossip.)

- What steps do you need to take to make things right? How can you do it in a godly way?
3. Has anyone in the group left a previous church and didn't leave well?
- What steps do you need to take so that you can enter well at HCWO and be a healthy part of the church?
 - Does anyone have a testimony that you would like to share about leaving another church well?
 - What blessings resulted from leaving well?
4. Are there any areas of disagreement within your mini-church?
- What steps you need to take so you can become like-minded in harmony with one another?
5. What are some of the healthy signs of unity in your mini-church?
- What are some of the healthy signs of unity at HCWO?
 - How can we work to preserve and protect that unity?
6. Take time to pray together as a group that God will preserve your unity as a mini-church.
- Pray that he would guard your hearts against offense and bitterness and grudges and the urge to defend yourselves.
 - Pray that God would search your heart and scrub your motives.
 - In those areas where you still need to pursue unity, pray that God would give you what it takes to fight through to unity so that you can connect at the heart level and come into a place of growth and blessing.
 - Above all else, pray for a heart of unity with God Himself.
 - Pray a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for who Father God is over, with and for us. Ask Him to continue to reveal His heart as Father, Son and Holy Spirit with us.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to teach his oneness so that He will bless us as an Acts 2.
 - Ask God to help or mini-church to be unified, and that He would use us to encourage oneness in our church.
 - Pray and ask God to show us how we can go out as one to touch the hearts and lives in our community.
 - Thank God for our Hope Chapel West Oahu leaders who choose to honor God and strive for unity in the body in every way.